

The South

Marist School for Boys, Savannah, Georgia

The Marist teaching apostolate extended to the South in 1919 as a result of negotiations between Brother Heribert, Provincial, and Father Vincent Foley, C.F.S., Vicar General of the Savannah Diocese. This priest, a former student of the brothers at St. Vincent de Paul School in New York City, highly recommended his former teachers to his superior, Bishop Kieley.(69.) Five brothers were therefore sent in September to staff Marist School for Boys. Brother Paul Stratonic was appointed the principal of this Cathedral Parish Grammar school.

For the next twenty years a full grammar school faculty taught a generation of boys to become an active laity in this predominantly Protestant area.(70.) Through the close co-operation of the small Catholic community (7,000) the school became an influential and efficient institution.

As a result of the economic depression of the thirties the Cathedral parish could not continue financing Marist School for Boys. Because the brothers could not continue their work, they planned to withdraw from the school in June 1939. The Bishop, Most Rev. Gerald P. O'Hara, who did not want to lose their services requested Brother Paul Stratonic, Provincial, to staff a diocesan high school in Augusta, Georgia. His request was granted. The brothers returned to Georgia the next September to the diocesan school in Augusta.

Aquinas High School, Augusta, Georgia

Brother Nicholas Mary, former Director of Marist School in Savannah, opened Boys' Catholic High School in Augusta, Georgia in September 1939. The building assigned for the school and brothers' residence on Telfair Street was constructed in 1850 and had been used as a hospital during the Civil War. This structure served as school and brothers' residence for eighteen years.

The first year four brothers organized a junior high school for the sixty-six applicants.(71.) Slowly as the enrollment increased to two hundred and fifty-five additional brothers were assigned as the three other high school classes were opened. In time a closely-knit student body, composed of both Catholics and Protestants, co-operated in achieving high scholastic and athletic standings in the city and the surrounding area. Several Protestants were converted to Catholicism as the result of the influence of the brothers and the student body.

For many years other quarters were sought for a new school. In 1956 Archbishop Gerald P. O'Hara contracted to have a ranch-type school built on Daniel Field. He wished to provide not only for the boys but also for the girls. As a result a co-institutional high school was built along with brothers' residence. In September 1957, the brothers and students vacated Boys' Catholic and moved in what is known as "Aquinas High School". The girls from Mount St. Joseph, conducted by the Sisters of St. Joseph, were transferred to their wing of this school. The boys' junior high school was discontinued. A diocesan priest was appointed presiding principal of both departments. In October 1956, the Archbishop dedicated the new school.(72.)

Today six Marist brothers and six Sisters of St. Joseph teach one hundred and fifty students in their respective departments. The brothers belong to the Esopus Province.

St. Joseph Academy, Brownsville, Texas

St. Joseph Academy had its beginning in 1866, when Father Guidet, O.M.I. had a small school built with money he had saved to visit his family.(73.) He managed the school for a while, then invited the Christian Brothers of the Schools to continue his work. Unfortunately they encountered too many difficulties and withdrew in 1895. (74.) In 1906 three Marist brothers arrived from Mexico City to takeover the direction of the school.

These missionaries, two French brothers and a Spanish brother, began the work of making the school a success. Brother Anthony Aubert, the first Director, devised various methods to attract students. From the original fifty students the enrollment increased annually. In 1920 and again in 1926 additional buildings had to be constructed to accommodate the increase in number of students.

The school soon built a fine reputation for scholastic achievement. It received accreditation in 1930 from the Texas Department of Education. In addition the program of exams sponsored by the Catholic University of America was adopted in 1945 to help maintain the high standards of the school.

During its history St. Joseph's has not only served as a grammar school and high school, but as a refuge for brothers fleeing the violent religious persecutions of Mexico. This was especially the case in 1914 and again in 1934. It also served as a Marist juniorate in 1951. This project, however, did not succeed because of the lack of applicants to the Marist life in this area.

One of the fondest dreams of the brothers in Brownsville was to sell the Academy and to build a new one on Canales Field. In 1942s Brother Louis Rodd, Director, took the first step toward this end by purchasing this field in the name of the Institute. Fourteen years later construction was begun.(75.) Financing such a project proved very difficult. But with the assistance of a popular drive two hundred thousand dollars were collected. The Esopus Province has assumed the rest of the financial obligations.

Before its completion in 1958 the Very Reverend Brother Leonidas Superior General, transferred the jurisdiction of the school to the Province of the United States. The first representatives of this Province attended the dedication ceremonies that were conducted by Bishop M.S. Garriga of Corpus Christi. In 1957 three brothers from the American Province arrived in Brownsville to begin replacing the Mexican Province brothers returning to their country. Today ten brothers teach 259 students in what is the oldest Marist school in the South and also its newest.

Saint Joseph Academy, Laredo, Texas

Just as the Brownsville Academy was built and staffed by brothers fleeing Mexico at the turn of the century, similarly the Laredo Academy was founded by exiled brothers fleeing Mexico in 1934. Within three years they had the present academy constructed. Thirteen brothers were then assigned to both the grammar and high school classes. This new building offered the latest in modern facilities to accommodate three hundred and fifty-five students. Slowly the enrollment grew. In the early forties a gymnasium and a football field were readied to complete the Academy plan.(76.)

Since 1957 the brothers from the United States Province have replaced the brothers from the Mexican Province in this school at the request of the major Superiors in Europe. Since the division of the Province Brothers from the Esopus Province are assigned here. Ten brothers now teach 134 boys. At this writing the brothers are dropping the lower grades year by year to relieve brothers for the staffing of the junior and high school.

Central Catholic High School, Wheeling, West Virginia

In 1933 Brother Paul Stratonic and seven brothers arrived in the Ohio Valley in answer to the request of His Excellency Bishop John J. Swint to staff Central Catholic High School in his episcopal city of Wheeling. For many years (1897-1925) the diocesan school had been conducted by the Xavarian Brothers. After their departure the Bishop appealed to other congregations to replace them. The Marist Brothers agreed to staff this school for September 1933.

Since that time the original enrollment of two hundred and thirty has increased to four hundred. The Diocese provided for the increase by the addition in 1937 of a gymnasium and classroom building. The community of brothers accordingly grew to fourteen.

In recent years the outdated brothers' residence and school proved to be a hardship for all. In order to meet the demands for better facilities, diocesan authorities decided to erect a new gymnasium (1957), and a new school building (1958-1961). These were dedicated on March 26, 1961. And lastly the Marist residence is under construction at this time (1961).

Since the division of the Province of the United States, the personnel of this school (12 brothers) has been furnished by the Poughkeepsie Province.

Marmion Military Academy, Aurora, Illinois

Brother Louis Omer, Provincial, initiated the work of the brothers at this Benedictine Fathers Academy in Aurora, Illinois, in 1944. War time demands on the lay teachers there inspired the Abbot to request the Marist Brothers to replace them. Six brothers with Brother Thomas Austin as director were sent to establish a Marist community at Marmion Academy.

For thirteen years the brothers worked closely with the Benedictine Fathers. Together they taught four-hundred and twenty-four day students and two hundred and twenty resident students.

In the early fifties the Benedictine Fathers offered to sell the day school to the brothers. Serious considerations were given by the Marist superiors to the acquisition of this property. But in 1997 a directive from Brother Superior General to send brothers to Texas necessitated the abandoning of the plan of purchase and the withdrawing of the brothers altogether.(77.)

Christopher Columbus High School, Miami, Florida

At the request of Bishop Coleman Carroll of the Diocese of Miami, Florida, the Marist Brothers of the Esopus Province agreed to staff Christopher Columbus High School in Miami in 1959.

Upon his accession to this See, Bishop Carroll began a program of building schools and churches. With the help of the people of the diocese, he had Christopher Columbus High School erected in 1957. The Bishop first staffed it with priests and lay teachers. Because he needed these priests for parish duties, he sought the assistance of the brothers to replace them.(78.)

The first community of six brothers arrived in Miami in August 1959. Brother Benedict Henry was appointed to replace Father Claude Brubaker as Principal. During the first six months the brothers and several lay teachers taught both regular students as well as the seminarians from nearby St. John Vianney Minor Seminary. In turn the Vincentian Fathers who conduct the seminary joined the High School faculty.

The school itself consisted of several buildings: two classroom buildings, a cafeteria, and a field house. The brothers' residence is situated in a section of one of the classroom buildings.

During the first year there were many needs to complete the facilities of the school. Fortunately a very active parents' organization found means to obtain funds to purchase laboratory equipment, football equipment, books for the library, furniture for the brothers' residence, and for the chapel. Their most noteworthy project was the drive to build a gymnasium. Through their efforts two major contributions were received for the gymnasium and laboratory equipment. The first was ninety-nine thousand dollars from Mr. & Mrs. Howard Korth, and the second, five thousand dollars for laboratory equipment from an anonymous donor. As a result, construction of an ultra modern gymnasium was completed in January 1961.(79.) It was dedicated on February 10th. Presently the school has the best of equipment and facilities to achieve notable scholastic and athletic results.

The present student body consists of four hundred and sixty-nine boys. In the near future an increase of three hundred and fifty is expected. Eventually the faculty will be increased to twenty brothers and ten lay teachers.

During the summer of 1961 hundreds of exiled religious from the communist controlled Island of Cuba landed in Miami. Bishop Coleman Carroll took great interest in seeing that these religious were housed and cared for. He invited the eighty-three Marist Brothers, who were expelled from fifteen schools in Cuba, to take residence at St. John Vianney seminary near the Marist residence in Miami.

Brother Pablo de la Cruz, provincial of these Cuban brothers, reassigned most of the brothers to Marist schools in Mexico, Chile, Guatemala and San Salvador.(80.) Sixteen he retained at the seminary to take courses in English at the request of the bishop. This was arranged for the purpose of having these brothers staff a high school in Carol City, outside Miami, in September 1961.(81.) Thirty others were assigned to St. Benedict's Abbey, Benet Lake, Wisconsin, and twelve young religious were assigned to Marist College, Poughkeepsie.

Brother Benedict Henry, director, and his Marist community helped to provide the many services needed to care for these new arrivals. Brother Director was asked to teach English at the seminary. Fifteen Christian Brothers, ten priests, and thirty seminarians arrived-at the seminary to take up residence and to take the offered courses. (82.)

Champagnat Hall, Hyattsville, Maryland

For many years the Marist superiors considered opening a house of studies near the Catholic University of America in Washington, D. C. To this end a six acre property was purchased in 1930, but for many years the Province could not finance any construction. In the meantime a second property was purchased in 1939. This latter property offered a two story house, which was a residence for sisters, the Servants of the Blessed Virgin. It suited the immediate needs of the Marist students, and provided sixteen acres of land in the town of Hyattsville, Maryland, a short distance from the University. It has been known as Champagnat Hall since.(83.)

Five brothers were assigned to establish the community there in the summer of 1939. Three of these started college courses at Catholic University, while the other two worked on the development of the estate. Similar Marist communities were assigned there annually until 1951. In that year the house was rented to the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Six years later, Brother Linus William, Provincial, reopened the house as a Marist community.(84.)

In 1958 the University authorities obtained the services of the brothers as proctors for the Men's Residences on the Campus. Champagnat Hall then became primarily a retreat from proctoring work, and a summer residence for brothers studying at the University. This establishment is presently assigned to the Poughkeepsie Province.