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On the day of his nomination to the Supreme Court, Clarence Thomas paid tribute to the nuns who helped him as a child and he acknowledged a debt of gratitude to the heroic work done for African Americans by Roman Catholic religious orders in the South.' When

the Great Migration transferred large numbers of African Americans to northern cities with large, established Catholic populations, the Church replicated these efforts.[2] Although few blacks, except those from Louisiana, were Roman Catholics, church leaders developed an African American version of the popular ethnic parish for them, replete with an array of social welfare services: food programs, shelter for travelers, child care and, above all, schools for their young. The underlying reason for these activities was simple: to convert African Americans to Roman Catholicism.

In the very rationalistic Roman Catholic theology popular in the early years of the twentieth century, conversion meant primarily an intellectual assent to the creed, cult, and code of the Catholic church and faithful participation in Sunday worship. But, in addition to the purely spiritual dimensions of conversion, becoming a Roman Catholic also offered a way to inculcate blacks, as other foreigners, with the intellectual skills and character traits that would enable them to cope with urban life in white, northern society.[3] In short, Church membership had spiritual and social dimensions for African Americans. The chief instrument of this program: the Catholic school. Hand in hand with religious instruction, Catholic schools conveyed important lessons in self-control, sobriety, the importance of hard work and punctuality. At the same time they encouraged the professional aspirations and racial pride of their African American charges.

A representative case study of these urban institutions was St. Benedict the Moor Mission in Milwaukee. St. Benedict Mission was established in 1908 as one of a number of "colored missions" created by the Catholic church for African Americans migrating north in the early years of the twentieth century. Like many of these other missions, a free day school for blacks was founded and the mission was staffed by religious communities of men and women.[4] What made St. Benedict's distinctive from other Catholic missions to African Americans was its sponsorship of a popular boarding school for elementary and high school youth, male and female. Until its closure in the early fifties, this boarding school attracted African Americans from around the nation, but most notably from the Midwest. Among its more illustrious alumni were Harold Washington, later mayor of Chicago, and entertainers Redd Foxx and Lionel Hampton. The boarding school was seen by its founders as the most effective tool for helping blacks make the transition to life in northern society as well as ensuring that they would remain lifelong Catholics. By rooting out bad habits of laziness, violence, and immorality while at the same time providing an experience of academic success, they would instill character traits that would last a lifetime.

The African American community in Milwaukee was small through much of the nineteenth century. The numbers began to grow when Milwaukee's economic base shifted from commerce to industry in the early twentieth century. It was only the promise of industrial jobs around the time of the two World Wars that swelled the numbers of African Americans living in the city.[5] Huddled in the city's sixth ward, a small section just north of the central business district, the black community became an established part of Milwaukee city life by 1900.

The origins of Catholic ministry among the members of the black community in Milwaukee can be traced back to 1886 when a white Catholic layman named Charles Boetting began working among the small Negro community in the heart of the city. Boetting's efforts brought together a handful of black Catholics to worship at old St. Gall's Church on 2nd and Michigan. However, Boetting's activities transgressed on the "turf" of the local Jesuit priests who ran St. Gall's and he left the city abruptly abandoning the fledgling community he had founded. St. Gall's Church eventually merged with another Jesuit-run congregation, Holy Name on Eleventh and State and this community became the nucleus of still another new parish on Twelfth and Grand called Gesu. When Gesu opened its doors in the winter of 1894, black Catholics were urged to attend the recently completed church. However, here, as at St. Gall's, they were compelled to sit in the gallery. Moreover, Gesu was farther removed from their residences than Holy Name. The sheer distance coupled with the discriminatory attitudes of some of the parishioners and parish priests caused many to drop away.[6]

In 1908 Captain Lincoln C. Valle, a black Catholic layman and his wife Julia arrived in Milwaukee to take up work among the members of their race. Valle had been a participant in the Catholic Negro Congresses of the late nineteenth century and very active in organizing African American Catholics in Chicago. Soon after marrying Julia Yoular, Captain Valle headed for Milwaukee strongly motivated to bring Catholicism to African Americans.[7] Upon arriving, the Valles were warmly received by Archbishop Sebastian Messmer who helped them establish a storefront mission chapel named in honor of St. Benedict the Moor and permitted the priests from the German-speaking Old St. Mary's on Broadway to assist them. Building on the small handful of Catholics left from Boetting's era, the Valles worked indefatigably to increase the numbers of black Catholics. In 1910 Valle described his efforts in Milwaukee in a letter to Josephite Father Justin McCarthy:

Our work is moving along nicely here. In fact the success of this work, through my own efforts as a layman has startled this part of the country. I have had the entire management of the work. Without a Pastor and without the regular attention of a Priest, we have had Mass in our chapel attended by the Capuchin Fathers, whom I have induced to volunteer their services. I have had the services of the Sisters of Notre Dame to take charge of Sunday school which I have started 2 months ago.[8]

In the same letter, Valle asked for an African American priest to serve permanently at the Mission. However, the Capuchins agreed to assume full-time responsibility in 1911 and secured a new property for the Mission at 1041 N. 9th Street. Messmer eventually turned over the whole mission to their control. The School Sisters of Notre Dame also expanded their commitment to the Mission by opening a small day school in September 1912 and assuming care of the mission chapel.[9] The advent of the two religious communities spelled the end of the Valles's involvement. Captain Valle was accused of public drunkenness and misappropriation of mission funds and Julia became of the object of unflattering gossip. The husband-wife team left the city in 1913.[10]

Meanwhile, the Capuchins gradually began buying up property around the mission site. Until 1913, the priests working at the mission commuted from St. Francis Friary to St. Benedict's. In 1913, the first permanent resident pastor took up residence in one of the newly acquired mission buildings, Father Stephen John Eckert. Eckert's vision would be integral to the success of the mission.

Eckert was a native of Ontario, Canada, and had been ordained in 1898.[11] From the very beginning of his priestly ministry he wanted to work with African Americans and spent some time working at a Capuchin parish in Harlem before coming to Milwaukee. Upon arriving in mid-July 1913, Eckert began walking the neighborhoods around the Mission knocking on doors and asking the black denizens if they had heard of St. Benedict's and if they would be interested in sending their children to its school. "I have seen within the last few days," he wrote his religious superior in mid-August, "over two hundred colored faces . . . They all received me, with a few exceptions, most cordially." [12] Indeed, the response to Eckert's invitation was phenomenal as black Milwau-keans of all denominations came to the Mission for services and sent their children to the school. By 1920 one hundred and twenty children were enrolled, most of them non-Catholics. Contributing to the success of the school was a decision made in 1913 to accept three orphan children, the Cattron brothers. Instead of being boarded with a local family, they lived in the building with Eckert. These three boys were the beginnings of the boarding school program that would run in tandem with the existing day school. The boarding school would be a feature of St. Benedict's until 1954. On the average about three hundred children would attend the school every year, over half of them boarders. By the late forties it had a waiting list of over 4,000 applicants from virtually every state in the Union.[13]

Eckert gave the boarding school primacy, taking comfort and an example from the work of the founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament (a congregation that accepted black women), Mother Katherine Drexel, who had established similar institutions. To her he wrote: "We have learned from your circular that the best means to work for the colored children is providing boarding schools." [14] Eckert's strong preference for a boarding school as the best way to reach African Americans was reflective of the feelings of many white priests in "colored" work. Although devoted to African Americans, Eckert believes, as Cyprian Davis has observed of other white priests, in a "paternalistic conception of their [African Americans] lack of moral fiber." [15] While other priests attributed these moral deficiencies to the debilitating effects of slavery, Eckert attributed them to the deplorable conditions in the urban ghettos of the north. These he learned first-hand as he trudged from home to home in Milwaukee's overcrowded sixth ward. In the dilapidated homes he was appalled to see the number of broken families, the poor morality, and the continual troubles that black youth had with the police. He wrote to Drexel: "so many live in unfavorable surroundings and. . .so many are left at sea owing to marriage ties being broken." [16]

Even allowing black boarding students to go home on vacation could be perilous as Eckert wrote to Mission benefactors:

Three years of experience has taught us that not infrequently much of our good work is being destroyed in the hearts of these children who spend their vacation away from here. . . . To do all we can that children may not be spoiled by being away from us during the summer vacation, we are willing to keep them, if necessary, at what it would cost parents to keep them at home.[17]

As he wrote to his superior who considered discontinuing the boarding operation at one point: "a home gives real results, for more good can be done according to the best authorities in one year by means of it [the boarding school] than in five and ten years by a day school." [18]

An additional reason for promoting the boarding school was to insure the commitment of the young blacks to Catholicism--a commitment that many of them often made while in the school. These numbers cheered Eckert, but he and the other priests at the mission were often saddened when their young neophytes drifted away from the church once they left the environment of the Mission. This was especially true of the day students who shuttled back and forth between the Catholic cocoon of St. Benedict's and their own neighborhoods which were religiously mixed or non-practicing. For Eckert and his successors, falling away from the practice of the Catholic faith was one short step from a return to degradation. Only a boarding school would provide the reinforcement necessary for an enduring Catholic faith. "The fact is," he wrote to Archbishop George Mundelein of Chicago, "that if properly instructed they become the most exemplary Christians." [19]

Finally, only the intense environment of a boarding school would produce the upright, hard-working, and moral black populace that would end the rampant discrimination and racism against African Americans. Eckert deeply admired Booker T. Washington and his efforts at uplift at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. [20] From his perspective, Eckert saw the only hope for the uplift of the race in its conversion to Catholicism with its strict moral code and its insistence on upright ethical behavior and personal discipline. "The Negroes [sic] look up to the Catholic Church today as the only Church to bring true help to their race," he wrote in a paper just before his death. [21] To priests he had written earlier:

Convinced that it is the duty of the white man who brought the colored freedom to help him spiritually and materially until he can take care of himself and . . . no truer help can be given him than by opening a [boarding] school. [22]

In a variation on Booker Washington's theme: only educated and industrious black people would be able to demonstrate that they were worthy of full membership in American society and would dispel the terrible prejudice that characterized white society. This theme was underscored by a visitor brought to the mission by Eckert, who "reminded them [the students] how many crimes are attributed to their race. . . and then exhorted them to help to pull down prejudice by their exemplary lives. . . ." [23]

Indeed Eckert became so convinced of the need to isolate blacks from the deleterious features of the black ghetto that he agreed to move the school out of the city to a rural community in northern Racine County called Corliss (today Sturtevant). The Dominican Sisters of Racine agreed to lease an empty girl's academy to the Capuchins for the year 1920-1921 in the hopes that they would purchase it. The Dominicans sweetened the offer with a promise to staff the school free of charge. Eckert's hopes that he could create a Catholic Tuskegee in the rural atmosphere of Corliss, Wisconsin did not materialize. The venture hit serious financial problems, complicated by the objections of many African American parents who did not want their sons and daughters on farms--that is why they had left the rural south in the first place.[24] Eckert was compelled to admit defeat and he moved the school back to its urban location.

Upon its return to Milwaukee the mission school entered a period of serious crisis. The Dominican Sisters, who had helped on the Corliss project, were reluctant to move to Milwaukee.[25] Although a few came as support staff, the teaching duties had to be carried by costly lay teachers. Eckert and his superiors tried to find other religious communities of Sisters to staff the school, including Mother Katherine Drexel's Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, but to no avail. Finally, after securing promises from Eckert for decent living quarters for the sisters, the Dominican superior, Mother Romana Thom, agreed to fully staff the Mission School.[26] From that point on, the Dominicans and the Capuchins formed an effective, if at times rocky, working relationship until 1967, when the elementary school program at St. Benedict's was discontinued.

When Eckert returned to Milwaukee, he devoted himself to full time fund-raising for St. Benedict's until his death in 1923. Administering the affairs of the mission was first given to Father Sebastian Schaff and later Father Philip Steffes, who served as pastor until his death in 1950. Steffes was equally committed to Eckert's vision of the school, but, being a much better manager than the peripatetic Eckert, was able to bring many of Eckert's dreams to fruition. For example he was able to build a Romanesque mission church and decorated it handsomely through the benefactions of local Milwaukeeans. His greatest stroke of luck was to interest one of the wealthiest Milwaukeeans of the day, brewer Ernest G. Miller, in the affairs of St. Benedict's. Miller had watched the construction of the church from afar and one day in 1923 visited the site, found Steffes, and asked if he needed money. Steffes readily said yes and Miller gave \$50,000 for the completion of the work. This was only the beginning. In 1925 he purchased the old Marquette Academy adjacent to the mission, on Tenth and State for the huge sum of \$125,000 and presented it to the Capuchins. Miller asked that his name be publicly acknowledged and that the children of the mission pray that he be healed from some malady that kept him in the warmer climates of the Caribbean and Florida for much of the year.[27] The new buildings gave ample room for the expansion of the boarding facilities.

With these new facilities the boarding and day school programs grew in numbers. In the late twenties a two-year "commercial" course was added to the St. Benedict curriculum. In 1938,

the course was expanded to a four-year high school program which lasted, with a brief interruption between 1948 and 1951, until 1964. The grade school closed several years later when expressway construction went right through the middle of the property. Today, only the church building stands. Before it closed at least two thousand African American children went through St. Benedict's.[28]

How did the school affect the life and behavior of the African American children who flocked to it? Three key areas emerge: religious formation, academics, and community life.

RELIGIOUS FORMATION

We have a clear picture of the religious dimension of the school through the chronicles kept by the Capuchins and Dominicans. These relate details of religious celebrations, the visits of superiors, occasional frustrations and disappointments and answered prayers. From these documents it is clear that the primary purpose of the school was to convert blacks to Catholicism. Annually, anywhere from 100 to 150 school children were baptized in impressive group ceremonies.[29] Although Eckert and his successors took pains to insist that these conversions were not coerced, the social pressure especially for boarding students must have been great.[30] How many of them remained Catholic is difficult to determine with any accuracy. However, impressionistic evidence gathered from occasional reunions reveals a continued Catholic identity for many of St. Benedict's graduates in both the day and boarding schools.[31]

Other elements of Roman Catholic teaching were brought to bear. The manner of teaching morality popular among Catholics in the first half of this century was through prescriptive manuals and catechisms which spelled out, often in painstaking detail, the various kinds of sins and faults that a believer ought to avoid.[32] Spun from the ten commandments, the prescriptions of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and the church's own extensive moral code, these books taught in rather clear, legalistic terms the difference between right and wrong and the penalties attached for the latter behavior. Vivid descriptions of the torments of hell or the pains of purgatory reinforced the lessons.

Yet another feature of Roman Catholic religious formation that the children of St. Benedict's experienced was Catholic ritual. The elaborate and mysterious ceremonies of Roman Catholicism must have struck many of the African American youth as strange. For those who were practicing Baptists and Methodists, Catholic ceremonies lacked the spontaneity of religious services in their churches. Moreover, the hierarchical structure of Roman Catholicism precluded lay participation in any meaningful way. Yet the Latin ceremonies and pageantry of the celebrations were attractive to many African Americans, many of whom did become and remain devout Catholics. Indeed, African American youngsters vied to become altar boys which meant learning the prayers and responses of the Mass which were in Latin and dressing in the Roman cassock and surplice. These religious ceremonies and devotions to the saints and the Blessed Virgin Mary were indeed a very different experience for the young men and women of the mission, but they had a formative effect on their evolving

religious sensibilities. This is no better indicated than by the number of them who became and remained Catholics. A smaller number expressed interest in becoming sisters and priests.[33]

One small concession to popular participation that blended Catholic piety with Protestant idioms of black worship was the so-called Storm Novena. The novena was a popular form of Catholic petitionary prayer consisting of nine days of prayer to a saint or the Blessed Virgin seeking a favor.[34] The black children were encouraged by the priests and sisters to "storm" heaven with their prayers and eventually the custom developed of praying nine times each day with arms outstretched before the altar (a rather unusual prayer posture in Catholic worship until the advent of Catholic pentecostalism in the sixties and seventies) to petition God to grant a particular request. The children of St. Benedict's constantly made the Storm Novena and attributed the successes in the mission's life to the power of the prayers. It was also an important selling point to possible benefactors: in exchange for a Storm Novena they were encouraged to donate to the Mission.[35]

ACADEMICS

The academic program of St. Benedict's was dominated by the theological focus of Catholicism, which was heavily neoscholastic. Philip Gleason has convincingly demonstrated how neoscholasticism constituted an official ideology for the church in this era and how this ideology was translated into practice.[36] According to this particular approach, truth was both objective and knowable. Clear and distinct ideas could be taught and one could be sure of them. More over, Catholics believed that faith and reason were compatible. Hence, Catholic schools taught all branches of knowledge from the perspective that these were to bring one to the threshold of faith.

The two religious communities of Sisters who conducted the school had established programs of study that translated these insights into standard curriculums.[37] The curriculum of the elementary program emphasized the mastery of reading, writing, and basic mathematics. Pedagogical techniques relied heavily on rote memorization and regular repetition of rules and mathematical tables. For the higher grades, the Racine Dominicans drew from their long years of experience with girls academies in Racine and supplemented a basically classical curriculum with the fine arts of music, art, public speaking, and dramatics. The high school as well had a small department of domestic economy which taught the girls sewing. Boys were offered some trade courses in printing and "manual arts." However, these latter programs were smaller and although earlier in its history some of the Capuchins had planned to emphasize industrial arts and domestic skills as the core of the curriculum, these never materialized and St. Benedict's never had the reputation of being a vocational school. Sports and recreational programs also augmented the school program and St. Benedict fielded teams in all the competitive sports.

An anonymous author wrote of the effects of a St. Benedict's education:

Many students upon their leaving the school find that they are much in advance in practical knowledge over their friends. The erudition they have received under the influence of religion gives them an advantage in life. The confidence they have is very noticeable by their friends and marks one of the desirable qualities in character traits which St. Benedict's inspires.[38]

But the curriculum was also calculated to the needs of the young blacks who very much wished to learn more about their heritage. The sense of racial inferiority felt by some of the black children who attended St. Benedict's was no more pathetically revealed than in an anecdote related in the Capuchin chronicles. When a Notre Dame Sister discovered one of her pupils rubbing white facial powder on his cheeks, she took it from him and the lad apologized to her by saying "he wanted to be white like her." At another time, the black children asked the same sister: "Why did not God make us all white like you." [39] More over, as Milwaukee's African American population grew, incidents of racial discrimination accelerated as well, even among Catholics.[40]

To help children overcome these feelings of inferiority, the priests and the sisters arranged events that cultivated and reinforced a sense of ethnic pride. Visits by prominent black leaders to the Milwaukee mission provided important role models of successful African American figures. The day after Christmas in 1916, African nationalist Marcus Garvey spoke to the children and teachers at the Mission about the proliferation of Catholicism among the blacks of Haiti. Students of St. Benedict's met and gave a copy of their year book to Bill "Bojangles" Robinson who was performing at the local Riverside Theater. When the entertainer generously spent time with the students, explaining his career, they came back duly impressed. In 1944, Harlem Renaissance poet Claude McKay spent a day with the students sharing his poetry and the reasons for his recent conversion to Catholicism.[41] The mission hired an African American teacher, Charles Madison, who also served as role model for the students.

Equally impressive was the emphasis given by the sisters to the study of black history and historical figures of the Negro race. In 1943, what later was known as Black History Month was celebrated in February with an assembly commemorating the contributions of notable African American historical figures such as Crispus Attucks, Marian Anderson, Ralph Metcalfe, Benjamin Banneker, and even a favorite black Catholic priest, Father William Lane, who periodically visited the school from his home in Minnesota.[42]

COMMUNITY LIFE

The dynamics of boarding school life also had a significant impact on the lives of these black youngsters. The chronicle of the School Sisters of Notre Dame records the state of the first students that appeared in 1912: "rough street boys, with no shoes on their feet, their trousers. . .dirty and torn. They said that they came to the Catholic school thinking they would get something to eat." [43] Not all of the black youth that entered the Mission school were as desperately poor as these first five, but most were not much removed from these

conditions. For many of the young people, the regimen of life at the Mission imposed order on their lives, provided them with clean clothes and regularly scheduled meals.[44] The difference from their home environment and the environment of the mission was summed up years later by graduate, George Gaines who recalled: "When I came to St. Ben's I felt as if I had been transplanted to another planet." [45]

To do this, the regime of the boarding school was strict. Harold Washington, who attended the school from 1928 to 1932, later observed that "St. Ben's got me ready for the army." [46] Students followed a strict daily schedule which began with early rising and attendance at Mass. Household chores were apportioned among the youngsters according to their age and capabilities and a regularly scheduled study hall made sure they did their home work and kept on task with their studies. Discipline was firm and infractions against the rules often merited corporal punishment.[47] One incident revealed the nature of the approach to discipline. When a Notre Dame sister discovered a troublesome student attempting to knock a crucifix off the wall, the chronicle reports: "She [Sister Marie] downed him and gave him and the others an object lesson they would not so soon forget." The chronicle concluded: "From that time the crucifix remained unmolested in its place of honor." [48] Runaways were a persistent problem as well. occasionally, older students would sneak off the mission property for fun in the downtown. Some, having had enough of the discipline of the school, would stow away on trains heading south. For those who were caught, the punishment was swift and painful. Such was the case of one Roy Mitchell, whom the chronicle reported as "again playing truant" in the early summer of 1913. When Mitchell was spotted by one of the priests of the Mission riding in a truck, he took off running being chased by the priest who caught him, dragged him to a local Catholic school "where after a good flogging, he was kept at the monastery until the probation office notified us what to do with him." [49] If the discipline was firm it was probably because there were repeated incidents of running away, vandalism, petty theft, and disrespect for Catholic values. Not all efforts to reform the young people were successful and there were expulsions. However, people noticed the changed behavior. One truancy officer "expressed his surprise" to one of the Notre Dame Sisters, "to see the change and improvement of the children. I do not understand your method," he commented.[50]

But whatever difficulties administering discipline may have posed to the priests and sisters they realized that their students would need a great deal to withstand the forces of racism in society and even in the Catholic Church. Father Philip Steffes, who oversaw the mission for nearly thirty years, was especially aware of the racism that still existed within the Catholic church. He expressed his concerns about the exclusion of the rapidly growing black population from white parishes in a letter to Archbishop Samuel A. Stritch of Milwaukee: "The only reason to fear that the Negro will be lost to the Church is the old and bitter evil of segregation. The Negro is not welcome except in Negro churches and schools. . . . There is little encouragement for a colored man to join the Catholic church in Wisconsin if he knows he can be a Catholic in Milwaukee at St. Benedict's but it is impossible for him to be a

Catholic in Madison and Beloit."[51] Hopefully, graduates from St. Benedict's would be equipped intellectually and spiritually to confront white society.

St. Benedict's discontinued its boarding school in 1954 and in 1964, the high school program was phased out altogether leaving only the elementary school. When expressway construction cut through the heart of the plant, St. Benedict grade school closed as well in 1967. By this time the black population of Milwaukee had increased considerably and the population center had moved farther north from the mission site. The Milwaukee archdiocese had attempted to preserve a specifically designated "colored" parish when it opened Blessed Martin de Porres mission in 1950, just north of St. Benedict's. However, other Catholic parishes and schools abandoned their whites-only policy and admitted blacks. By the 1960s, few African-Americans lived in the St. Benedict's neighborhood and it became as much a victim of the changing demographics of Milwaukee as the older German and Irish parishes that dot the central city. Moreover, the Catholic church in many cities has down-played the role of convert-making and education in favor of social welfare and social justice advocacy approaches to African Americans. St. Benedict's is again a model of this strategy. Its current operative programs, apart from its worship, are a meal program and a center for criminal justice. Nonetheless, the legacy of its former work still remains among its faithful alumni who gather periodically and among whose ranks are many professionals and deeply dedicated Roman Catholics.

NOTES

1 *The best history of Catholic efforts among African Americans is Cyprian Davis, The History of Black Catholics in the United States (New York: Crossroad, 1990); see also Stephen J. Ochs, Desegregating the Altar (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).*

2 *Some of the best literature on the Great Migration includes James Grossman, Land of Hope (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Nicholas Lemann, The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1991); Karl E. Taueber and Alma F. Taueber, "The Negro as an American Immigrant Group," American Journal of Sociology 69 (January 1964) 374-382. John McGreevy's "American Catholics and the Great Migration" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1992) examines the reaction of church leaders and members to the influx of African Americans in several selected cities.*

3 *In their quest to help African Americans adapt to the exigencies of life in the urban north, American Catholic leaders seemed to share a great deal with the Progressive reformers of the period. Progressive concern for order and efficiency is discussed in Samuel P. Hays, Response to Industrialism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) and Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967). Paul S. Boyer's book, Urban Masses and the Moral Order (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978) discusses the relationship between municipal reform and the behavior of the immigrant poor. However, although both Catholic leaders and Progressives stressed the alteration of personal behavior for social conformity, Catholic efforts were directed more towards the membership in a particular religious body.*

[4](#) For a discussion of these schools in nearby Chicago see James W. Sanders, *The Education of Urban Minority* (New York: Oxford University, 1977) 205-224.

[5](#) The following statistical chart gives some idea of the growth of the African American population of Milwaukee:

Year	Total pop.	African American pop.
1910	373,857	980
1920	457,147	2229
1930	578,249	7501
1940	587,472	12,773 (source, U.S. Census)

For additional information on African American life in Milwaukee, see Joe William Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat: 1915-1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1985).

- 6 Capuchin Chronicles, 1886, Archives of the Province of St. Joseph, Detroit (hereafter APSJ.)
- 7 See David Spalding, "The Negro Catholic Congresses, 1889-1894", *Catholic Historical Review* 55 (October, 1969) 337-357. Valle's identity still remains something of a mystery. Cyprian Davis has discussed the man and his career in *The History of Black Catholics*, 210-213. Some insight into Valle's life prior to becoming involved in Catholic evangelization is hinted at in one of the house chronicles of the School Sisters of Notre Dame which asserts that he held the title "captain" because he had been in one of the Negro units of the United States Army during the Spanish-American War.
- 8 Lincoln C. Valle to Justin McCarthy, June 2, 1910, Josephite Archives, Box 31--Section D--Letter 9. Valle also began the publication of a black Catholic periodical called "The Catholic Truth" and ran a free employment bureau for African Americans.
- 9 *Mother Caroline and the School Sisters of Notre Dante in America, 1892-1928 Vol. II* (St. Louis: Woodward and Tieman Co., 1928) 123.
- 10 See Davis, 211-213 for fuller details of the Valles' departure.
- 11 For more biographical information about Stephen J. Eckert, see Berchmans Bittle, *A Herald of the Great King* (Milwaukee: St. Benedict the Moor Mission, 1933). Catholic officials in the Capuchin Order and the Archdiocese of Milwaukee began the process of recommending Eckert for canonization in the fifties.
- 12 Eckert to Benno Aichinger, August 25, 1913, Eckert Papers, APSJ.

- 13 "St. Benedict the Moor School Here Help Negro Youth on Way to College Education," Milwaukee Journal (February 25, 1946). "Work in the Midwest," Our Negro and Indian Missions (January, 1947) 15.
- 14 Eckert to Mother Katherine Drexel, January 26, 1915, copy in St. Benedict Files, Archives of the Racine Dominicans (hereafter ARD.) All subsequent references to material from ARD are from St. Benedict Files.
- 15 Davis, Black Catholics, 184.
- 16 Eckert to Drexel, July 12, 1916, copy in ARD.
- 17 Eckert to "Dear Friend" May 29, 1916, copy in ARD.
- 18 Eckert to Aichinger, April 18, 1922, Eckert Papers, APSJ.
- 19 Eckert to George Mundelein, April 23, 1922, Eckert Papers, APSJ.
- 20 Indicative of this admiration for Washington was the lengthy obituary of the black leader Eckert penned in the chronicle of his community. No other person's death, even those of his religious brethren, received as much space and ink as the notice of Washington's death. Capuchin Chronicles, November 13, 1915, APSJ. For other American Catholic reaction to Washington see Davis, Black Catholics, 177. Interestingly there is little or no mention in these chronicles or the history of the mission of the other great African American figure of the day, W.E.B. DuBois. While this is no indication that his name and accomplishments were unknown, it seems to have been the case that Catholic priests who worked in the "colored apostolate" had ambivalent feelings about DuBois's insistence on racial integration, deeming it subordinate to the true goal of conversion. Although Catholic efforts towards inter-racialism would develop in the thirties and forties with the work of men like Jesuit John LaFarge and the Catholic Inter-racial Councils, white priests in black work kept somewhat aloof from the movement. Such was the case in Chicago where the differences between convert-makers and inter-racialists were well known. See my This Confident Church: Catholic Leadership and Life in Chicago, 1940-1965 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992) 283-288.
- 21 Stephen Eckert, "Bring the Negro into the Church," unpublished paper, Eckert Papers, APSJ.
- 22 Eckert to "Dear Father," May 29, 1916, copy in ARD.
- 23 Capuchin Chronicle, June 27, 1915, APSJ.
- 24 "The St. Benedict Story," St. Benedict Reunion Day, July 27, 1974, ARD.
- 25 Sister M. Benedicta to Benno Aichinger, August 15, 1921, APSJ.
- 26 Benno Aichinger to Romana Thom, March 15, 1923, ARD.
- 27 Steffes also secured money to build a hospital for blacks near the mission site, relying heavily on the contributed services of Franciscan Sisters from Minneapolis. St. Anthony Hospital became an important health care delivery center for urban blacks far distant from the County Hospital which, in contrast to other private hospitals in the city, welcomed the blacks. All of these events are related in Celestine N. Bittle, O.M. Cap., A Romance of Lady Poverty: The History of the Province of St. Joseph of

the Capuchin Order in the United States (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1933) 450-455.

- 28 The transcripts of the St. Benedict's pupils (elementary and high school) are on microfiche at the Education Department of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Well over 1500 African American children attended the school according to these records.
- 29 A description of one of these ceremonies in the twenties relates the baptism of 91 children and three adults. It took eleven priests officiating simultaneously to baptize all of them. Not all of these converts were from the school. This account is found in the 'Milwaukee' section of *The Colored Harvest* 15 (March-April 1927) 13.
- 30 Apparently there was concern among the Capuchins themselves about the quality of the conversions and criticism was leveled at Eckert for coercive techniques. See Bittle, 435-436.
- 31 References to the continued interest of the alumni and their Catholic identity are made in a text written by Sister Agnes Simmons, "History of the Racine Dominicans at St. Benedict the Moor in Milwaukee, 1987" unpublished paper in ARD.
- 32 For an overview of the history of Catholic moral teaching see John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1987)
- 33 According to the archdiocesan Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee today has about 3,000 practicing African American Catholics, many of whom attribute their Catholic roots to St. Benedict's. Eckert's earliest correspondence referred to various students at the mission who wished to become sisters. There is no way of knowing how many of these joined or persevered. The Capuchins had some success in attracting African American vocations. Stephen Ochs' book *Desegregating the Altar*, reflects the problems African American youth had in becoming diocesan priests. It was only in 1975 that the Archdiocese of Milwaukee ordained two African American men, Joseph Perry and Marvin Knighton, to the priesthood.
- 34 "The Storm Novena," no author, pamphlet, ARD.
- 35 Fund raising materials in the St. Benedict files of APSJ show how the Storm Novena was used as an incentive for donating to the mission. The promise of prayers and novenas was and still remains a staple of fund-raising for Roman Catholic religious orders.
- 36 Philip Gleason, "Neoscholasticism as Preconciliar Ideology," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 7 (Fall 1968) 401-412.
- 37 The School Sisters of Notre Dame had a "Program of Studies" that first appeared in the late 19th century and was periodically updated. Copies of these are in the Archives of the School Sisters of Notre Dame (hereafter ASND.) The Racine Dominicans approach to education is described in M. Hottense Kohler, *Rooted in Hope* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1962) 164.
- 38 "St. Benedict Mission." no author, written c. 1940, ARD.
- 39 Capuchin Chronicles, December 18, 1912, APSJ.
- 40 Joe William Trotter relates this in *Black Milwaukee*, 149-225. An instance of Catholic discrimination is related in the Josephite publication *Our Colored Missions*,

36 (September 1950) 142, when it reprinted an editorial from the Milwaukee archdiocese's Catholic Herald Citizen decrying an act of intolerance against a black family at a local parish.

- 41 These observances are all recorded in the school chronicle kept by the Dominican Sisters, ARD.
- 42 These events are related in the St. Benedict year book called Maroon. Copies of this book from 1938-1942 can be found in ARD.
- 43 St. Benedict the Moor Chronicles, ASND.
- 44 Sister Agnes Simmons' text compiles historical reminiscences of the sisters who worked at St. Benedict's. These pages attest to their poverty and the disorderly nature of their life. See Simmons, "History of the Racine Dominicans at St. Benedict the Moor . . ." in ARD.
- 45 Quoted in Simmons, "A History of Racine Dominicans," ARD.
- 46 "Remembering Harold," Racine Journal Times (April 23, 1983). clipping in ARD.
- 47 Corporal punishment was a feature of Catholic schooling until the 1940s when school administrators began to ban it. However, although it was discontinued in day schools, boarding schools such as St. Benedict's and minor seminaries where young men began their studies for the priesthood still employed it.
- 48 Capuchin Chronicles, January 27, 1913, APSJ.
- 49 Capuchin Chronicles, June 23, 1913, APSJ.
- 50 St. Benedict the Moor Chronicle, ASND.
- 51 Philip Steffes to Samuel A. Stritch, January 6, 1940, St. Benedict the Moor Parish File, Archives of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

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