

Generalate, Rome,
August 1, 1948

My dear Sisters,

On the seventh of October of last year, the Feast of the Holy Rosary, our Cardinal Protector, Benedict Aloisi Masella, officially opened the Generalate and Motherhouse of our Congregation in Rome. As you know, dear Sisters, we have been residing in Casa Pio X, the Provincial House of the Italian Province. Casa Pio X will always be associated with the opening of the Generalate in Rome and lovingly remembered for having sheltered us with such beneficent hospitality, and for having shared with us during these months the privilege of Perpetual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Within this year the good God has provided His Notre Dame Congregation with their third Motherhouse. Our first Motherhouse was officially opened at Coesfeld on the second of April, 1850. Thirty-eight years later, our second Motherhouse was established at Mülhausen on the seventh of January, 1888. During sixty years our beloved Congregation grew and spread far and wide, from its secure stronghold in the Rhineland. After years of planning, prayer, and much sacrifice on the part of our two deceased Reverend Mothers, Mary Cecilia and Mary Antonie, the way was paved for the acquisition of our third Motherhouse and Generalate in the center of Christendom, Rome.

The actual purchase of our new center was made on Wednesday, June 23, 1948. Many months were spent in seeking a suitable site for the administration of our large and rapidly spreading Congregation. It was evident that we must have a center worthy of our size and character. Over one hundred pieces of property were viewed and evaluated. After much prayer especially to our dear deceased Mother Mary Antonie, on Friday, March 19, the feast of the Seven Dolours of our Blessed Mother and the Feast of St. Joseph, we finally decided upon an estate on the outskirts of Rome, situated on the north-easterly slopes of Monte Mario. It was on Monte Mario that deceased Mother Mary Antonie had hoped to locate the future Generalate. The property consists of approximately eight acres of land, well landscaped. The Villa on the property is large but much damaged through war circumstances, having been occupied for six years, first by soldiers from both armies and then by refugees. At present we are restoring and enlarging the Villa. Our new address in the future will be Via della Camilluccia, 45. Since our new Motherhouse will for the first time function independently, that is apart from any Province, in the interest of the entire Congregation, its official title will be "CURIA GENERALIZIA della Congregazione delle Suore di Nostra Signora." The Curia Generalizia is, at the same time, the Motherhouse of the Congregation.

Yesterday, Saturday, on the feast of St. Ignatius, and on the anniversary day of dear Mother Mary Antonie's death, the "foundation stone" was laid under the future chapel of our new Generalate. In Italy it is the custom to lay a "foundation stone" and not a "corner-stone." The foundation stone is the first stone laid in the ground and the entire structure rests on this stone - hence, the significance of its name.

Our Cardinal Protector was happy to be with us for this solemn function, which took place at 5:30 p.m. We invited as many friends among the clergy and laity as were available during these hot summer months, and, at the same time, we tried to have representatives from every country where our Congregation is established. Since the majority of our friends are on vacation outside of

Rome, we were delighted to have the following dignitaries, priests, and laity at our simple but beautiful celebration:

His Eminence, Benedict Cardinal Aloisi Masella, with his chaplain and his "Servo."

The Most Reverend Alois Hudal, Titular Bishop of Ela, Rector of Collegio S. Maria dell' Anima

The Reverend Engelbert Kirschbaum, S.J., Professor of Archaeology, Gregorian University

The Reverend V. A. McCormick, S.J., the American Assistant General of the Society of Jesus

The Reverend Timothy Bouscaren, S.J., Procurator General of the Society of Jesus

The Reverend John B. Hirschmann, S.J., Gregorian University

The Reverend George Bartsch, O.S.B., Sant' Anselmo Abbey

The Reverend Paul Gordana, O.S.B., Sant' Anselmo Abbey

The Reverend Beda Thum, O.S.B., Sant' Anselmo Abbey

The Reverend Vincenzo Hermans, dei PP. Trappisti

The Reverend Alexandro Svete, Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

The Reverend Giuseppe Bini, Provincial Superior of the Camillus Fathers with two companions

The Reverend James P. Kerwan, Secretary in the Secretariat of State of His Holiness

The Reverend Joseph Sullivan, N.C.W.C. News Service

The Reverend Professor Fridolin Merk, Associate Director of Institute Rosenberg, St.Gall, Switzerland

The Reverend John S. Mix, C.R., Superior General of the Resurrection Fathers and his companion, the Reverend Joseph Samborski, C.R.

Dr. George Huber, a Journalist from Switzerland

Avvocato Professore Commendatore Eraldo Tuttolomondo

Two Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

Four Maria Bambina Sisters

The Mother General of the Schervier Sisters with two Sister-companions

Countess Spada, our neighbor on Via della Camilluccia

The Passarelli Brothers, - Architects and Engineers

His Eminence, Benedict Cardinal Aloisi Masella, arrived punctually. The Reverend George Bartsch, O.S.B. and the Reverend Paul Gordana, O.S.B. acted as Assistant Priests to the Cardinal; the Reverend Giuseppe Bini was Master of Ceremonies.



A beautiful altar had been erected on the spacious terrazzo in the front of the house. The first act of the ceremony was the reading by the Reverend George Bartsch, O.S.B. of the manuscript which was to be placed in the stone. The text of the manuscript is as follows:

"Bene fundata est domus Domini supra firmam petram" (Ps.137, 2).

In the Name of the Most Blessed and Undivided Trinity, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

In the year of salvation 1948, on the last day and Saturday of the month of July, the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola, during the glorious Pontificate of His Holiness Pope Pius XII, Eugenio Pacelli, during the Protectorate of His Eminence, Benedict Cardinal Aloisi Masella, during the Generalate of Reverend Mother Mary Vera, during the incumbency of the President of the Italian Republic Luigi Einaudi and of the Mayor of the City of Rome, Salvatore Rebecchini, His Eminence, Benedict Cardinal Aloisi Masella laid the cornerstone of the Generalate of the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame.

Present at the solemn ceremony were the Reverend Mother General Mary Vera with the members of the Generalate, the Provincial Superior and a number of Sisters from the Province of the Sacred Heart, Italy, members of the Reverend Clergy and friends of the Congregation.

The plan for the building of the Generalate house was drafted by the Architects, the Brothers Vincenzo and Lucio Passarelli, who were also entrusted with the supervision and direction of the work of construction; the construction proper was entrusted to the Contractor Giovanni Nepitelli.

The Lord of the house is Christ, before whose Eucharistic Throne incessantly by day and by night "prayer may be directed as incense, and the lifting up of hands, as evening sacrifice" (Ps.140,2). Mary, Our Lady, is the Mother of this house, which will be known under her sublime and consoling Name. St. Joseph, with whose visible support the estate was acquired, is its paternal protector and supreme counsel.

May the Generalate house be a place of prayer and labor, of fidelity to the Holy Rule and of loyalty to the unalloyed primitive religious spirit, a haven of love and of peace, the center and focal point of the entire world-wide Congregation.

To this document, which will be enclosed within the cornerstone, we have affixed our signatures:



(At this point the signatures were affixed.)

Rome, July 31, 1948

Benedict Cardinal Aloisi Masella

Reverend Mother Mary Vera

Mother Mary Bonaventura

Mother Mary Aloisi

Mother Mary Modesta

Mother Mary Verona

All the clergy present

Vincenzo Passarelli

Lucio Passarelli

Eraldo Tuttolomondo

Giovanni Nepitelli

After the signing of the document, the

Cardinal prefaced the reading of the telegram from the Holy Father with the following words:

"The important decision made by the Sisters of Notre Dame to transfer the Generalate to Rome is a great consolation for all. Here in this edifice in the heart of Christendom, the Reverend Mother General with her Council will reside. I feel assured that this house will be a source of untold blessings upon the entire Congregation. I am delighted as Cardinal Protector of this esteemed

Congregation to bless and lay the cornerstone. I rejoice in offering the assurance that the Holy Father, who governs the Church with such tender solicitude and who is ever active on behalf of the religious congregations, has been pleased to unite with us on this occasion and to impart the Apostolic Benediction. His Holiness has sent the following telegram:

"Mother Mary Vera,
Superior General
The Sisters of Notre Dame
Via Como, 41
Roma

Fully confident that the new Generalate house of the Sisters of Notre Dame is an active center of numerous good works and of zealous Eucharistic Devotion, the Holy Father

accompanies with paternal felicitations the laying of the cornerstone, and with his whole heart imparts the Apostolic Benediction in answer to your petition, that it may mediate a happy completion and the incessant Divine Assistance.



Montini, Sostituto
Secretariat of State of His Holiness
July 31, 1948 - Telegram"

Because of the threatening weather, the Cardinal curtailed his address. He then bestowed the Apostolic Blessing, after which the beautifully hand-printed parchment document and the telegram were rolled and placed in the container, which in turn was inserted and cemented in its proper place in the foundation stone. The blessing of the foundation stone followed, after which the workmen lowered the stone into the corner space deep in the earth.



The first mortar was placed by the Cardinal, and then I, too, was allowed to drop some mortar on the top of the stone, after which the workmen completed the task of laying our foundation stone, which is to bear the happy weight of the "Adoration Chapel."

The religious ceremony concluded with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Before receiving the first Blessing of our Eucharistic King on the grounds of our new Generalate, we prayed the "House Blessing," taken from our Community Prayer-book in Italian. The "we" consisted of the clergy and friends, practically all the Sisters from Casa Pio X, the Superiors and Sisters from our three other houses in

this section of Italy, representatives from our northern Italian houses (i.e. the Sisters who are in Rome for a course in education); the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, the Schervier Sisters, the Maria Bambina Sisters from across the street, and the workmen. After the House Blessing Prayer,

followed Christ's FIRST BLESSING. Our sentiments during these precious moments can best be expressed in the words of the Psalmist, used in today's Holy Mass: "God in His holy place; God who maketh men of one mind to dwell in a house; He shall give power and strength to His people" (Ps.67,6-7). We concluded the ceremony with MIRA IL TUO POPOLO, a favorite Italian hymn to our Blessed Mother. The chorus of men's voices was beautiful to hear, and I am sure it pierced the heavens to draw down abundant blessings on our new project.

After the ceremony, we entertained the Cardinal, the clergy, our contractor and architects, and Commendatore Tuttolomondo in the summer house located in the rear of the estate near a former beautiful rose garden. The Sisters had cleaned and decorated the house so that it presented a very pleasing and attractive appearance. At the same time, the workers had a well-earned treat. This is the custom here in Italy. At the blessing of the foundation stone, all the men working on the house partake in a "little feast" consisting of wine, bread, meat, cheese, and cigarettes. It was a happy gathering, and all were delighted with the serenity of the place, the wholesome breezes, the beautiful views, and the appropriateness of the estate for its new purpose. At the close of the day we said a heartfelt "Deo Gratias" to the good God and our Blessed Mother, for another milestone had been reached in the development of our beloved Congregation.

Our account would not be complete without recording the "little miracle" that occurred with regard to the weather. During the entire ceremony, until the singing of the TANTUM ERGO, the sky was overcast with dark rain clouds, it thundered repeatedly, and a few rain drops fell, but that was all on our grounds. In Rome, however, and all around us during this time, there was a heavy downpour of rain. Because of the rain, which the Cardinal encountered en route to Via della Camilluccia, he returned to his home to change from his cardinal red to his black cassock; the priest who brought the Blessed Sacrament was astounded that we had no rain, because when he left the monastery of the Camillus Fathers, which is only about five minutes away from us, it was raining heavily. You can appreciate, dear Sisters, how grateful we were for this "little miracle."

As you understand from the above description, dear Sisters, our new Generalate is far from being completed. It has just been begun, and we are living in hopes that by next Easter we shall be enjoying the serenity and delightful solitude of our new Generalate Home, where all is so appropriate for Perpetual Adoration. Meantime, dear Sisters, you will keep YOUR Curia Generalizia in your prayers and sacrifices. It is yours. What is done here is for all of you. It is the center of our spirit and the symbol of our unity. May God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit bless and preserve these precious heritages, that they may fructify and spread to every corner of the globe. To commemorate the acquisition of our Generalate and third Motherhouse as well as to honor our deceased Mothers Mary Cecilia and Mary Antonie of blessed memory, who have been so closely associated with this project, we may continue until further notice, to have the weekly recreation each Tuesday evening at supper, outside of the Lenten season.

Now, my dear Sisters in Germany and in Holland, you will understand why your Mother in Christ has had to delay her visitation. I have always kept you in mind and have often asked the good Lord to "hurry things along a little" so that I could soon go to my dear Sisters in both countries.

Meanwhile, I have been able to get away for a week or two and have visited England, Belgium, and Spain. In the fall of the year, I shall be able to get away for two months at least. Then I hope to visit each house and become acquainted with each Sister. It cannot be a regular visitation this time.

Until the new Generalate is completed, you can appreciate how impossible it will be for me to be away for any length of time. As soon as we are settled after Easter and have had the blessing of the new house, then I can make plans for the regular visitation. The establishment of a permanent center, Motherhouse and Generalate, my dear Sisters, was an urgent necessity in our large Congregation. Through your patience and understanding, many problems and perplexities have been expedited, I am sure. God bless you for all!

A time honored custom in the Congregation expects all the houses to assist as well as they can, a newly-formed institution. You have always done this so loyally and with such sisterly love. Because of the situation in the world today, it will be impossible for our dear Sisters in Germany and Holland to help in a material way. Later, Maria Regina Province will very generously come to our assistance by sending us a few more Sisters. If it be possible for the various houses in Germany and Holland to assist us a little in furnishing our Chapel with linens and vestments from their own supply, we shall be most grateful. We do not expect you to send new articles, nor do we wish you to deplete your resources because, at the present time, you have no means of replenishing your supply. A little assistance will go a long way. The dear Sisters in the United States, in Brazil, and in Italy have come to our aid in many ways; this was especially manifest when the last Sisters came from the American shores. God bless you a thousandfold and reward you in abundance.

Your loving Mother in Christ,

(Signed) M A R Y V E R A

Pr.be J. Chr.