

Cincinnati, 26th March, 1828.
Rev. Th. Moultrie.

Rev. Dear Father,

I deem it necessary to write to yr Rev^{erend} on a subject of great importance. Whilst I was in La last month I spent a few days in the Parishes of Ascension & Iberville. Whilst on a visit to one of our former Louis students, Mr Wm Thompson, I found that he was owner of a great number of the colored people that once belonged to the Prov^{ince} of Maryland. About one third of the whole number reside on his plantation, which is adjacent to Senator Johnson's, & not long since formed a part of the latter. & if I am not mistaken, Mr Thompson is in some kind of partnership with Mr Johnson. On my expressing a desire to see some of the colored folks, who have near relations, brothers, sisters, &c at Florissant, Mr Thompson had the kindness to assemble them & to allow me to enquire into their circumstances &c. They are all very good people, industrious, faithful, moral &c - the character given to them by their owners & their neighbors. But they have scarcely any chance to attend to their religious duties, & the children, several of them not yet baptized, grow up without any religious instruction whatever. Mr Thompson's plantation is about 10 miles from Donaldsonville, where there is a Catholic Church attended by the Lazarists, & to reach it, they have to cross the Bayou Lafourche. Some of the stoutest can walk it, & do so some times, - but very seldom, - as the distance is so great, & their services are generally wanted at home. The women & children have a cart at their disposal, but they scarcely ever use it; & the cart, after all, could accommodate but a very small number. Then all they can do is to hear Mass, - the sermon being always in french, of which they do not understand. Some of the women told me weeping that they had not been to Church for more than a year, & these women appeared strong & healthy, but they have either to attend to their children, or to house hold work, & cannot absent themselves so long. Hence you may judge how it fares

with the aged, the infirm, the children &c.

I have endeavored to prevail upon one of the two Priests of Donaldsonville to visit them some times, say once a month, to say Mass for them, & to instruct them &c. & Mr. Boulier's coadjutor is very willing to do it, but he cannot go on Sundays, & on week days the people would have to work, & many would not be permitted to attend. It seems that one of the conditions of the contract yet made with Mr. Johnson was that they should have a chapel & that they should be permitted to attend to their religious duties. The above account must convince yo^r Rev^d that this condition is not complied with. - Besides at least one half, probably two thirds of the colored people that have come to sea from the Maryland Province live on two other plantations, far distant from any church, - one on Bayou Sabou, the other on Bayou Mange, where they never see a Catholic Priest. The neighbors (of Mr. Thompson & Gov. Johnson) all say that the latter had been very unfortunate in business, & though he might be willing, is unable to build a church for those who live on his & on Mr. Thompson's plantation. I have had a kind of consultation with Rev. Mr. Boulier & several of the neighbors (of Gov. Johnson) on the subject, among them were Judge Duffell & John Elder of Bulte now son in law to the former, whose plantations are not more than a mile from Mr. Thompson's. They are all willing to contribute towards the erection of a Church, provided it be built on neutral ground, so that their own colored people may frequent it, be instructed &c. Mrs. Thompson, an excellent Lady a recent convert to the Catholic Church, & the daughter of a respectable merchant of Louisiana is extremely anxious to see this plan carried into execution. - all the people love her, appear much attached to her & call her a good kind mistress, - but her husband Mr. Th. is an Episcopalian & is rather indifferent on the subject. Now, one of the neighbors, Mr. Elder or Judge Duffell is willing to give a large lot on which to build a church, & in process of time a presbytery or parsonage, & all the rest are willing to contribute handsomely, provide the Gov. of Maryland will head the subscription list. When I enquired what sum they would consider it reasonable for the Gov. of Md. to subscribe towards the good work, they all agreed that \$1000 would be a fair contribution, & that if they obtained it, they would raise the rest, (at least an equal sum) among themselves. It was observed too that the said \$1000 might be taken from the next payment of the interest, & that Mr. Forrestall might be directed to pay over that amount to Rev. Mr. Boulier, who would act as treasurer & disburser, & who promised that if a church be built on the plan proposed, his coadjutor would attend it regularly

once or twice a month, & would remain two or three days at a
time in order to instruct the children, hear confessions &c -
& I promised on my part to write to your Rev. on the
subject & assured them that I had no doubt on my mind
but that you would willingly & joyfully contribute to the good
work. To tell you the truth, I am of opinion that the Gover-
nor of M. is in conscience bound to contribute to it, & thus to pro-
vide for the salvation of those poor people who are now
utterly neglected, & whose children grow up without any notion
of Religion. Justice as well as Charity require that their former
masters should step in, & aid other well disposed persons to
procure them the means of salvation.

I therefore entreat yr Rev. to lay the subject before the
Provincial & his Consultors, & to lose no time in providing for
those poor abandoned people, - who, though neglected, are still
firmly attached to their Religion.

With respect to those who are at Bayou Tabou & Bayou
Mange I scarcely know what plan could be adopted to better
their circumstances, - unless their Protestant Masters could be
induced to procure in and support a Priest for their benefit.
Mr Johnson will probably be still in Washington when this
will reach you & might be consulted as regards the manner of
providing for the spiritual welfare of the colored people now
residing on those two Bayous, - but with respect to those who
reside on Mr Thompson's & on his own plantation, opposite Iberville
or Montgomery Island, I would strongly advise yr Rev. to adopt
& execute the plan I have suggested & to do it without delay.

F. Verhaegen is stationed at St Xavier's Church in St Louis
& pro temp. replaces F. Gleizal who has been asked to preach
le Carême en français at the Cathedral of New Orleans - It is
probable that after F. G's arrival in the beginning of May, F. Verh.
will have a more permanent appointment. We expect P. Eled & De
Smet during the course of next month - I hope they will be in
St. L. - or at least in N. Y. before Easter Sunday.

Recommending myself to your holy St. & prayers, I remain,

Rev. Dear Father

Your devoted Serv. in C^t
F. Verhaegen