

EDUARDUS HOSP

EXPERIENCES OF FATHER JOSEPH PROST C.S.S.R. IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS, 1858-60 (1).

SUMMARIUM.

Indefessus noster historiographus P. Ed. Hosp in archivo provinciae Austriacae commentarios diurnos invenit P. is Iosephi Prost (* 11 I 1804, Freinberg, apud Linz, Ober-Österreich; † 19 III 1885, Puchheim), qui inter illustriores eiusdem temporis sodales iure merito connumerandus est.

Studiis theologicis in Universitate Wien fere absolutis, noviciatum nostrum, ob admirationem « spiritualitatis » P. is Passerat, ingressus est; professione religiosa 24 III 1831 emissa, sacerdotio auctus est 29 VII 1832, eodem fere tempore quo primi tres alumni nostri, ab urbe Wien profecti, sanctum nostrum sodalicium in confoederatos Americae septentrionalis Status invexerant, centum annos post ipsam Congregationem fundatam. Cum vero, tribus iam annis elapsis, hi alfonsiani vexilliferi, propter incredibiles difficultates domum stabilem obtinere non valuerint, Vicarius gen. lis P. Passerat an. 1835 P. em Prost (cum P. e Czakert) oceanum transmigrare iussit, qui a P. e Rectore Maiore Ripoli opportunis instructus facultatibus, spem in suam personam positam non fefellit, sed iam an. 1836 primum collegium in USA perfecit (Rochester), cui mox alios adiungere potuit (1839 Pittsburgh, 1840 Baltimore). Eodem anno P. Prost primum novicium americanum recepit, Ioannem Neumann, postea episcopum in Philadelphia, sanctitatis fama celebrem. An. tandem 1842, rebus feliciter statutis, in Austriam reversus est; sed insaevientibus rerum politicarum motibus coactus, an. 1848 in Angliam emigravit, ex quo regno (inter alia) opus missionum nostrarum ad populum in Hiberniam (Eire) induxit. An. 1855 iterum in Austriam reversus, tertio emigrare iussus est an. 1858, hac vice in insulas Americae centralis, quas communiter « Virgin Islands » vocant, tunc sub dominio regni Danmark (pro ea parte quae illo momento a nostris excolenda erat). Intrepi-

(1) This article does not pretend to give a complete history of the foundation of the Congregation in the Virgin Islands (diocese of San Juan, Puerto Rico), but merely describes the experiences of Father Prost. The sources are his diaries (especially Volume III), which are preserved in the provincial archives in Vienna: Connected with them are the « Explanations » (Supplements; abbreviated Expl.), which are also in Vienna. Moreover the letters of Father Prost to Father Edward Douglas in the archives of the Generalate at Rome, and the diary of Father Louis Dold in the Redemptorist archives at Brooklyn, N.Y. were likewise utilized.

dus P. Prost, longo tempore solus, usque ad an. 1860 strenue adlaboravit, ut « Missio » alfonsiana constitueretur, quae postea a provincia Belgica assumpta, nunc ad duas viceprovincias de Roseau (Belg.) et de San Juan (Balt.) pertinet.

Historia igitur initiorum huius « Missionis », satis concitatorum, praecipue ex diariis diurnis P.is Prost desumptam, a P.e Hosp delectabiliter delineatur. Clarus auctor hanc suam narrationem ad primum centenarium huius « Missionis » (1858-1958) oblatam voluit, eiusque desiderio libentissime satisfecimus.

Notandum tandem est, studium P.is Hosp originaliter scriptum fuisse in lingua germanica cum titulo: « Erlebnisse des P. Josef Prost CSSR auf den Jungfern-Inseln in Mittelamerika, 1858-1860 ». Versionem in linguam anglicam curavit P. Stephanus McKenna, qui pauca etiam leviaque menda ultro correxit. Notare iuvat, ipsum P.em McKenna occasione eiusdem centenarii librum edidisse memorialem: *Our hundred Years. The History of the Redemptorist Fathers in St. Thomas, V.I., 1858-1958*; s.l. et a.; 4°, 80, ill.

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1. The Ecclesiastical Situation

The Virgin Islands, of which St. Thomas, St. Croix (Santa Cruz), and St. John are the largest, form the connecting link between the Greater and the Lesser Antilles. As all the islands belonging to this chain, they were originally part of Spain's colonial empire. But later on St. Croix and St. John came into the possession of France, while St. Thomas was settled by Denmark in 1672. As St. Croix and St. John were not very productive, France sold them to Denmark in 1733. These three islands, St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John remained under Danish rule until 1917, when they were bought by the United States for the sum of twenty-five million dollars.

Very little is known about the early religious history of the Virgin Islands, since they were never colonized by Spain. Naturally under French rule the Catholic religion was introduced into St. Croix, and the members of the Dominican order began to labor there about 1635. But the famous French traveller, Father Jean Labat O.P., found only one white Catholic and a few Negro Catholics when he came to St. Thomas in 1701. Most of the French whom he met were Huguenots, who had been driven into exile by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 (2). Lutheranism became the State-Church in the Danish Islands. But the Moravian Brethren were afterwards granted permission to live there, while the Jesuits and the Methodists were denied admittance.

The revolutions in the first half of the nineteenth century necessitated a complete reorganization of the ecclesiastical affairs in the former colonies of Spain. On April 30, 1850 Pope Pius IX erected the archdiocese of Tri-

(2) LABAT Jean, *Nouveau Voyage aux Isles de l'Amérique* (La Haye 1724) Volume I 72 (St. Croix); Volume II 286-287 (St. Thomas).

nidad with Port of Spain as the archiepiscopal see. Among the archbishop's suffragans was the Bishop of Roseau on the island of Dominica. From this time on the Danish islands also belonged to this diocese of Roseau. In 1854 the Most Reverend Vincent Spaccapietra, as the Delegate of the Holy See, summoned the prelates of the English, Dutch and Danish colonies of Middle America to a synod at Trinidad. Its statutes were praised by the pope on September 4, and were also approved by Propaganda in the following year. It urged the bishops to see to it that the clergy gave good example, that the faithful were instructed, and that those who had gone astray were brought back to the Church (3).

Just about this time serious disturbances broke out in the church on the island of St. Thomas, that eventually led to the summoning of Father Prost (4). Father Pratt, the aged Spanish pastor of St. Thomas, was born in Barcelona. He was anxious to make a trip to his native land, but needed someone to take his place. A Corsican priest named Giorgetti now appeared in the West Indies, and offered to serve as the pastor's substitute. There can be no doubt that he had left Corsica without the permission of his bishop. Father Pratt made the necessary arrangements with the Archbishop of Trinidad, who was also the administrator of the diocese of Roseau at the time, so that Giorgetti could assume charge of the parish.

During the pastor's absence his vicar now began to court the favor of all the people in the parish. He portrayed the pastor as a mere exploiter, whose only concern was in making money. By this devious means he succeeded in winning over the parish to his side. When the pastor came back and saw that he could no longer count on the support of the parishioners, he again returned to Spain. The aged priest did not want to let the affair develop into an open quarrel. Giorgetti was now firmly entrenched.

The Bishop of Roseau had just died (5). Archbishop Spaccapietra, a Vincentian, was a special confidant of the pope, who had sent him as Nuncio to the West Indies, and then named him archbishop of Trinidad. As the administrator it was now his duty to intervene. He ordered Father Giorgetti to leave the church and the island of St. Thomas. But the latter refused, since he knew that he was protected by the Danish government. For the government, it is true, respected the person of the Catholic bishop, and showed him all the external signs of honor, but yet it did not recognize his authority as bishop in the church. Here as in Denmark the government maintained the Protestant principle in regard to the administration of the parish. It only recognized that man as pastor, whom the members of the parish had selected and recommended for confirmation. Up till then the wardens of the parish had only chosen the pastor sent to them by the

(3) SCHMIDLIN Josef, *Papstgeschichte der neuesten Zeit* (München 1934) II 155.

(4) Diary III 135 ff.; Expl. V 54 ff.

(5) The first bishop of Roseau, the Most Reverend Michael Monaghan, died at St. Thomas on July 18, 1855.

bishop, and presented him to the government. This was compatible with the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the bishop.

But after Giorgetti had ingratiated himself, and the archbishop had brought action against him, the parish by an overwhelming majority voted for him as their pastor, and presented him to the government for approval. The whole parish stood by Giorgetti, and of the six to seven thousand Catholics, only four hundred sided with the archbishop. The schismatics called themselves « vainquers » (conquerors), and referred to the Catholics as « Jesuits ». The Danish government protected Giorgetti and his followers in the possession of the church. Thus was the schism completed.

That such conditions were at all possible among Catholics, can only be explained by the circumstances that shaped the religious development of the island. The original inhabitants of the Lesser Antilles, the Indians, were exterminated. Therefore Negroes were imported from Africa as slaves, and were partly won over to the Catholic Church. The climate of the Antilles was harmful to the Europeans in a twofold respect. In the first place the tropical heat made work almost impossible for Europeans, and secondly the malignant fevers on the islands were a serious menace to their health. The only Europeans who came to these islands were officers, civil officials and the owners or managers of the plantations. They frequently left their wives at home, and this resulted in degrading moral abuses. A majority of these Europeans lived in concubinage with black women who were slaves. The child of a slave-woman was automatically considered a slave, and was therefore placed later on among the master's slaves. Nor was there less moral corruption among the Negroes. Besides the few Europeans and the great mass of the Negroes, there was also the mixed race, the Creoles, whose number grew steadily. The whole island-kingdom was a real Babel of iniquity, and the seaport of St. Thomas was quite notorious. The moral conditions did not improve even when slavery was abolished in 1848.

In addition there was the power of the anti-Catholic Freemasons, to whom even prominent Catholics belonged. The churchwardens in St. Thomas, who were themselves Freemasons or at least under their influence, were ranged on the side of Giorgetti. Moreover, the exercise of the pastoral ministry in the Antilles, and particularly so in St. Thomas, left much to be desired. The pastors sought to enrich themselves in the flourishing seaport, and at this very period they generally left there as wealthy men. All of these factors must be taken into account in order to understand the outbreak of the schism.

The archbishop was kept informed of these happenings by the loyal Catholics, and now sent them another priest, Father Orsini, who was an uncle of Giorgetti. Orsini was a man full of courage and energy, and it was hoped that he would be able to restore order. By command of the archbishop he was to be the parochial vicar, and Giorgetti was to serve as his assistant. A pastor would be only installed when the disturbances had ended. But even Orsini failed in his efforts, and was obliged to leave the island.

Thereupon the archbishop inflicted the penalty of suspension upon Giorgetti. In retaliation the wardens barricaded the doors of the church from within, so that the Blessed Sacrament could not even be removed. This happened with the approval of the government in March, 1855 (6). The archbishop appointed a pious priest named Lynch for the loyal Catholics. He rented a private house, and conducted services there for his devout little flock.

In the autumn of 1855 Pope Pius IX sent his secret chamberlain, Monsignor George Talbot, to the West Indies for the purpose of settling the disputes (7). Talbot was a descendant of the Earls of Shrewsbury, one of England's most distinguished and wealthiest Catholic families. He brought with him the pallium for the archbishop of Trinidad, and visited various islands. On the feast of St. Francis Xavier he arrived in St. Thomas, and was hospitably received by the most prominent of the loyal Catholic families. He succeeded in entering the church, but when he ascended the pulpit, such a tumult and riot broke out, that he had to take to flight, leaving his biretta behind him. He returned to Rome.

On Talbot's recommendation Pope Pius IX named the French priest, Michael Vesque, as the Bishop of Roseau. For twelve years he had been working very zealously in London as a pastor and the spiritual director of a convent of nuns. He was absolutely opposed to accepting the dignity and yielded only to a direct command of obedience. Since he was a personal friend of the Redemptorists, he made the retreat before his episcopal consecration in the Redemptorist community at Clapham, London. He was overcome with grief and burst into tears, as he travelled to the consecration in the company of the rector, Father George Coffin. But after his consecration by Cardinal Wiseman he immediately set out for the West Indies. On his arrival at St. Thomas on the way to Roseau, he prayed before the closed church, but was unable to enter it. He was thoroughly frightened by the fearful decline of the religious life. Many died without receiving the last Sacraments; many children were not baptized, and instead of marriages blessed by the Church, people were living in concubinage. He noted a return to barbarism in the completely debased state of religion and morals.

Now such treatment of a citizen of France [Bishop Vesque] in Danish waters was a grave insult to the French flag. In reporting the incident the French consul, a devout Catholic, also described the state of the Church in St. Thomas. As satisfaction for this lack of respect for the French flag, the Emperor Napoleon III insisted that the Danish government expel Giorgetti from the island, and return the church to the loyal Catholics and to the priest sent by the bishop. The Danish government submitted to these demands. Giorgetti was imprisoned and forced to leave the island. The governor of St. Thomas ordered the militia to march fully-armed before the

(6) WUEST Joseph, *Annales C.S.S.R. Provinciae Americanae* (Ilchester 1899) III 2, 3-

(7) SCHMIDLIN, *op. cit.* 156.

people, and escorted the priest, Father Orsini (8), and the faithful Catholics into the church, which he handed over to them with great solemnity.

This did not of course put an end to the schism, for all the schismatics vowed, that they would never enter the church or be associated in any way with the priest. Consequently the religious services offered a truly dismal sight, for even among the four hundred Catholics there were so many who were very indifferent about their religion, and many of the most prominent lived in concubinage. The schismatics would not give employment to anyone, except to those who belonged to their party; thus the schism deeply affected the economic life of the town.

Upon his return to Rome, Talbot drew up his report of the situation for the Holy Father. He had learned to know Father Held in his native England, and the two men had become very close friends. Talbot now advised the pope to send the Redemptorists to St. Thomas. But apart from this it was likewise the wish of Pius IX that every religious order take over some foreign mission, and therefore he approved of this recommendation. In February, 1857, Father Edward Douglas wrote from Rome in the name of the General, Father Mauron, to the provincial in Baltimore, Father George Ruland (9). But owing to the shortage of men, the latter could send no one at that particular time. Finally two men were appointed. But one of them died quite suddenly shortly afterwards, and the other had to assume the office of rector. The North American province, therefore, found it quite impossible to comply with this command.

Talbot published an article in the Augsburg *Postzeitung* about the religious and moral conditions in the West Indies, and the state of the Church in St. Thomas. Prost read this article with great interest, and it made a deep impression upon him (10). He corresponded with Father Douglas and also wrote to him about this article. At the end of his letter he remarked, that if he were younger, he would gladly go to the West Indies. Since the problem of St. Thomas was just then a source of great embarrassment for the Redemptorist authorities in Rome, they took this remark to mean, that Father Prost wanted to go to the West Indies. Prost of course was in consternation, when he was informed of how they had construed his words. He wrote a strong letter, protesting against this interpretation, but in Rome they now saw the way out of a critical situation, for they were anxious at all costs to carry out the pope's order. Prost had worked for many years in America, and seemed to be the man best fitted. And so it was that the direct command of Father General reached him on January 10, 1858. He was really terrified. Up to now he had always been « rolled around »

(8) In his diary (p. 11) Father Dold states that Bishop Vesque recalled Father Orsini to St. Thomas. Father Orsini was the pastor in St. Thomas when the schism ended and Father Prost arrived there. Cf. WUEST, *op. cit.* IV 310, 316-317. But Father Lynch was there when Father Dold arrived in May, 1858. Cf. WUEST IV 325.

(9) BYRNE John F., *The Redemptorist Centenaries* (Philadelphia 1932) 511.

(10) Diary III 139.

in the world, and almost invariably into new foundations. Now he was to assume charge of a church and start a new foundation in such critical circumstances, and in a completely foreign land. He was to labor in a church, where the sermons were preached in French; he read French books, it is true, but lacked fluency in speaking it. All of these things grieved him so deeply that he wept. But finally he had to recognize even here the guidance of divine Providence, which led him to a new field of labor.

2. Journey to the West Indies (11)

After packing his few belongings during the night, Prost left Katzelsdorf on his birthday, January 11, 1858. He had not yet become acclimated during his two months in Katzelsdorf. Moreover he could not adapt himself to many of the things in his environment. The small chapel of St. Anne and a small adjoining room were all that he had at this disposal for divine services. His relations with the pastor in the vicinity of the community were very strained; the furnishings were still quite primitive and were such as he had become sufficiently acquainted with in new foundations.

During the journey the provincial, Father Mangold, charged that Prost himself wanted to go to the West Indies. The fathers in Vienna were also of the same opinion. But it did not square with the actual facts. Prost's protest was to no avail. Then the provincial accused him of bringing complaints against him in Rome. Prost knew that he was innocent and made a vigorous denial, but Mangold still held to his former view. Some time previous to this the General Consultor, Father Haringer, had brought Prost's memorandum on the missions to Rome. Mangold may have received news of this in a distorted form, and placed his own interpretation upon it. This resulted in a very monosyllabic conversation for the rest of the journey.

A fresh quarrel soon developed in Vienna. According to the orders from Rome the provincial, Father Mangold, was to provide Father Prost with money and charge it to the account of Father General. Prost now requested one hundred pounds sterling (one thousand silver guilders). They were staggered by such a sum. But Prost declared that they could not expect him to go poor as a beggar into a foreign country, in order to begin a foundation. Finally he demanded this amount in no uncertain terms, otherwise he would not set out. The provincial then had to yield.

Mangold now thought that he could receive at least a part of the money from the Leopoldine Foundation. But he was told that this society was only for the United States. But they were hardly back in the house, when the cardinal's secretary arrived. He was commissioned by the cardinal to inform them, that a bond for one thousand guilders had just come to his residence; one half of it was set aside for the Holy Land, the other half for the West Indies. These five hundred guilders were equivalent to four hundred silver guilders according to the current rate of exchange at the

(11) Diary III 140-164; Expl. V 55-61.

time. And so the provincial still had to hand over six hundred silver guilders.

Furthermore, Father Prost would have liked to have had all the articles necessary for the celebration of holy Mass. But in Vienna they regarded this as unnecessary. Therefore he wrote from Vienna to Father Held in Belgium and Father Lans in Liverpool. He would also have liked to take a picture of the Mother of God along with him. Prost remained two days longer in Vienna, in order to make some arrangements for his journey. The rector, Father Coudenhove, suggested that he should travel to Passau and pay a visit to his aged mother. But Prost wanted to spare her the cruel pain of departure, and chose to go by way of Prague. The rector, Father Mastalirz, bought him a good watch. Father Madlener, whom he found here at the time, received him in a very friendly manner and consoled him.

From Prague he went by train to Liége without stopping at Dresden, Leipzig, Magdeburg or Cologne. Here the rector, Father Held, greeted him with sincere affection, and presented him with a beautiful vestment for Mass, silver containers for the holy oils, and some other articles. Held expressed his regret at being unable to give him a chalice, since he had to provide for the newly-found communities in France, but expressed the hope that he might obtain one in Brussels. They then travelled to Namur, in order to meet the Mother General of the Notre Dame Sisters, who received him very hospitably and offered Prost one hundred francs for his travelling-expenses. Father Held then accompanied his esteemed guest to Brussels and paid his fare. Their reception in the community of St. Magdalene could not be surpassed. Soon afterwards two chalices came to the house. Prost chose the more beautiful one, worth one hundred and twenty francs, which the rector paid.

Father Victor Dechamps, the future Cardinal-Archbishop of Mechlin, was the rector of the other community in Brussels. He made a present of some French books, stoles, cassocks and some other things to Father Prost. At Brussels Father Prost said good-bye to Father Held. Then he continued on to Antwerp. A priest, whom Father Dechamps sent along as a travelling-companion, also took care of all the expenses. The foundation in Antwerp was but of recent origin. The fathers had purchased the former convent of the Carmelite nuns, who had migrated to England at the outbreak of the French Revolution. They had settled in Lanherne, where Prost had been their confessor for two years. The church was being used as a warehouse, and the fathers could not buy it. Hence they built a provisional chapel in the garden, which pleased Father Prost very much. One of the fathers brought him into the city, and showed him the churches and the treasures they contained. Prost says, that what he saw there excelled anything that he had ever previously seen. The paintings of Rubens in the cathedral interested him. The choir-benches and the confessionals in all the churches were magnificent wood-carvings.

On Sunday afternoon Father Prost went aboard the steamer to England.

The brother-procurator had to accompany him to the harbor, and by order of the rector arranged for and paid for a comfortable state-room. An hour later he departed from the continent; he believed that it was indeed a farewell, and that he would never see it again.

On Monday afternoon they landed in London. All the ships and the whole city were gaily decorated, for this was the day on which the marriage of the Princess Victoria and Prince Frederick William of Prussia was celebrated. The community of Clapham was already awaiting the arrival of Father Prost. Father Lans had previously sent the altar-stone from Liverpool, which Prost had requested. In London he also purchased a large picture of the Blessed Virgin, a large color-print together with the frame and packing-case. Furthermore he procured some books that he still needed. In London he likewise secured his state-room on the ship, which cost him thirtyeight and one half pounds sterling; thus, with the incidental expenses, the total cost of the voyage to the bishop at Dominica amounted to forty pounds sterling (four hundred silver guilders).

Father Coffin, the rector and future bishop of Southwark, had already found accommodations for him in Southampton at the home of the chief customs officer who was a Catholic. He also accompanied him to this city. On Candlemas Day, February 2, Prost celebrated Mass in the housechapel of this official. Here he also found an old acquaintance, the convert Wilberforce and his wife. He was a brother of the Anglican bishop of Oxford. The large steamer had already left the harbor and anchored off shore. At four o'clock in the afternoon Father Coffin and Wilberforce went along with the traveller to America to the little steamer, which brought him to the large one amid rain and flurries of snow.

The first greeting he received, as he stepped aboard, was from a Frenchman: « C'est un diable » (It is a devil); but Prost acted as if he had heard nothing. When the young English deck-hands recognized him as a Catholic priest, they said among themselves: « We will have a stormy passage ». This was a reference to a popular superstition among English sailors, that the presence of a Catholic priest on the ship meant a stormy voyage.

The steamer « La Plata » had one thousand horse-power, and was then one of the largest vessels of its kind. It accommodated many passengers, but yet it was not crowded. February was not a favorable month for travelling to the West Indies. At this season the Europeans went from the Antilles to Europe in order to enjoy the spring-weather; on the other hand they were glad to leave Europe for the Antilles in October and November in order to escape the winter. In every cabin there were two berths, one above the other. Prost was happy at having a cabin by himself. The furnishings and service were like those in a first-class hotel. The officers of the ship were experienced and cultured Englishmen. While on duty one noted particularly their calmness and composure, their moderation in drinking and their fine deportment. They were kept under strict surveillance by the Admiralty.

The officers maintained a stern discipline and tolerated no unchristian behavior. There was a penalty of forty pounds sterling for bringing matches on board. The ship was well lighted at night, but all the lamps were firmly fastened. No passenger held a light in his hand. Smoking was permitted only at an appointed place on the fore-deck, and the smokers had to strike a light with flint and steel. Prost did not even receive a light to seal his letters. The postmaster sealed them himself. At sea fire is more dangerous than the water.

Everything was included in the fare except alcoholic liquors. The passengers were forbidden to bring such beverages with them on board, and to buy them on the ship was very costly. The purpose of these regulations was to prevent any drunken carousals. The ravenous hunger was amply satisfied during the sea-voyage. Early in the morning black coffee was brought to the passengers in bed. This was followed by a substantial breakfast at eight o'clock with coffee or tea. At twelve noon there was a lunch at which there was plenty of ham, cold roast and cheese. At this meal Prost usually drank strong port-beer, which was invigorating and nutritious, and agreed with him very well at sea. Dinner was at four in the afternoon. It was a bounteous repast and was served according to the English custom. Prost then took Spanish wine, because a bottle of it lasted longer. At seven in the evening the passengers received cold meats, butter and bread. Milk was also used for the coffee and tea; he now discovered something new, and learned for the first time about condensed milk.

The weather was very stormy during the first eight days of the voyage, and the headwind slowed the progress of the ship. The second half of the trip was very pleasant, because the ocean grew calmer, and the climate milder as they came into the temperate zone. As soon as they reached the Azores, they met with the most delightful spring weather. Finally masses of Sargasso weed also appeared. This is a plant that grows in the sea and is very similar to wild grapes. It was a sign that they had already passed the Tropic of Cancer. The increasing heat was another indication that they were now in the tropics. The coverlets disappeared and were replaced by sheets. The travellers laid aside their woolen garments, and were now seen in clothes of dazzling white.

Representatives of the different nations of Europe were found among the passengers and the servants of the ship. It was here that Prost heard Spanish for the first time; he had never imagined that it was such a fluent and easy language. A priest from a religious order in Peru, who dressed in a quite worldly manner, was on board. His own countrymen showed little regard for him, while they treated Prost with respect. He conversed with him in Latin. Then he struck up an acquaintance with a German Catholic family. They had returned for a visit to their home in Germany, and had brought along a tutor for their young son. The husband told Prost about the lamentable state of affairs in Mexico. Ever since Mexico had broken away from Spain and become independent, revolutionaries and gangsters had ruled

the country. The sea-voyage from Europe to Vera Cruz was far less dangerous than the voyage from Vera Cruz to Mexico City. Gangs of robbers were a menace to travellers even before the gates of Mexico City. He would consider it a great blessing for the country, if North America were to annex the whole territory; this would at least bring peace to the land. Every president knows that he will be overthrown by a revolution, and therefore seeks to enrich himself as quickly as possible. The great misfortune of Mexico is the predominant influence of the Freemasons.

Protestant passengers from Barbados, the most eastern island of the Lesser Antilles, often spoke with Prost. He explained the Catholic doctrine to them, and they were astounded, how everything Catholic had been misrepresented and falsified. The conversations made a deep impression. There were also two Protestant ministers travelling with him. The Episcopalian was assigned to a post on one of the islands, while the Presbyterian was bringing a bride for a colleague.

The celebration of Sunday on the ship was rather interesting. All the sailors and officers, who were not on duty at that particular time, appeared as did the passengers in their Sunday dress. The solemn churchgoing, from which the Catholics of course absented themselves, began at eleven o'clock. They withdrew and performed their devotions privately. Naturally there was no opportunity for celebrating holy Mass on English ships. In groups of twos the passengers walked to the large salon. There the captain recited some prayers and read something from the sacred Scriptures. Prost observed everything from his cabin, and found it proper and edifying. This was the way in which services were conducted on Sunday aboard all English ships (12).

On the last day of the voyage they began to move past islands, which seemed to rise from the water like mountain-peaks. The first island was shaped like a hat, and hence its name Sombrero. These islands are unfruitful. From a distance they saw rain falling in St. Thomas. The ship was two days behind schedule, as a result of the stormy weather at the start of the voyage. By using the coal carefully the captain had succeeded in making it last, but he had about a two hours' supply on hand. People were averse to travelling by steamer in the beginning, because they were afraid of running into similar difficulties, and that the coal might be exhausted before reaching their destination. In such an emergency the sails would have brought the ship only a little bit further. Thus the danger of death threatened the travellers at sea.

After a seventeen day voyage they arrived in the port of St. Thomas on a pitch-dark night. The ship cast anchor outside the harbor, and two discharges of the cannon announced its arrival. The view of St. Thomas at night was magnificent. The lovely West Indian sky cast an enchanting light, and the stars sparkled brilliantly against the gorgeous background of

(12) Diary III 148.

the dark-blue heavens. Light streamed from the lighthouses, while the lamps gleaming in the houses on the hills about the town was a scene that was particularly beautiful.

Prost had been expressly commanded, that he was not to stop first at St. Thomas, but to go directly to the bishop at Roseau. Smaller steamers provided transportation to other places. Now the passengers scattered in every direction; each one was concerned about himself and his baggage. Prost went on the vessel that made the trip to Dominica. It left St. Thomas at four in the morning, and therefore he had seen nothing of this island except the lights.

In the cabin of this steamer he came across the Frenchman, who had called him a devil in Southampton. Prost extended a friendly greeting to him in French. From then on he was like a changed man. They travelled together to Guadeloupe. As the Frenchman was leaving the ship at this place, he came to Father Prost once again, shook his hand cordially, and bade him a heartfelt farewell.

Their course was towards the south. The first stop was at the English island of St. Christopher [St. Kitts]. The steamer was immediately surrounded on all sides by the boats of the Negroes, who wanted to fetch the passengers as well as to sell their fruit. They shouted so and behaved in such an impertinent manner that the captain threatened them. The next point of disembarkation was the English island of Antigua, where a Protestant Anglican bishop resided. They passed by the Dutch islands, and did not stop again until they reached Guadeloupe. From a distance they saw the island enveloped in clouds. It was in the midst of one of those tropical storms that often come suddenly, burst with tremendous fury, and a short time later the heavens again appear serene. They entered the harbor of Basse Terre, at the western end of the island. The town then lay in ruins, because it had been destroyed by an earthquake. Such violent disturbances of the earth's surface are a common occurrence in the West Indies. Many of the islands are burnt-out volcanoes. On this voyage Prost saw for the first time palm-trees growing outdoors. From a distance the green landscape on these islands was a very picturesque sight.

At Guadeloupe the bishop of the island and his vicar-general boarded the ship in order to travel further south. Prost soon paid his respects to him. The bishop was very affable, and chatted with him until the late hours of the evening. He mentioned that he had formerly worked as a missionary in China, and had been consecrated in Hong Kong.

At eleven in the evening the ship entered Roseau. Prost at once got into a little boat. But the landing-place was so bad, that he was up to his knees in water when he started to go ashore. He was at once surrounded by a crowd of Negroes who spoke to him in French. They recognized him as a priest and showed their esteem for him. He learned from them, that the bishop had gone aboard the ship in order to greet the Bishop of Guadeloupe. As soon as Bishop Vesque heard that a Redemptorist had arrived for his

diocese, he immediately hastened back and found Father Prost still on the beach. He greeted him very effusively, gave directions for transporting his luggage, and brought him to his residence. Upon reaching there he knelt down, and said a *Te Deum* in thanksgiving that St. Alphonsus was sending his sons to him.

Here Prost had his first sleep on land in many days. But the heat and the crowing of the cocks prevented him from sleeping. The people in the West Indies own many fowl, and have had extraordinary success in raising them. But the cocks have already started their crowing by ten in the evening, and crow continuously throughout the night. But eventually Prost grew accustomed to this nocturnal disturbance in the new country.

The bishop rose at four, said holy Mass at five, and at six made a morning meditation with the faithful in the cathedral. His burning zeal was also manifested in other ways, so that Father Prost told him, that he would certainly not last very long by thus overtaxing his strength. The immediate future would indeed confirm this judgment. The French language and Catholicism continued to prevail, even after the island of Dominica had become an English possession. There were eight parishes on the island. The bishop had three priests living with him: his vicar-general, a French priest who had charge of an outlying parish, a young excellent Irish priest, and an Irish student of theology. Moreover the bishop had brought in Sisters, to whom he had transferred his best residence, while he was satisfied with a very modest home. He had been their spiritual director in England. They conducted a school for girls, while lay teachers taught in the school for boys. Each year the mission received twenty-five thousand francs from the Propagation of the Faith in Lyons. The bishop himself lived very poorly.

The cathedral was a large but unpretentious building with a very spacious presbytery. Father Prost preached here in English on two Sundays. For English was the language of the government, the educated class, and many of the people also understood it. The Mass was well attended. But Prost was somewhat surprised, when he saw the large church full of blacks, with only a white face shining here and there.

Bishop Vesque also made a tour of the island with his guest. Prost was fascinated by the mountain that continually sent forth clouds of smoke. These excursions had to be made on horseback, for there were no streets or roads, in the strict sense of the term, but only wretched footpaths. This mountainous island was distinguished from the other island of the Antilles by its many springs. But the labor situation on the island at that period left very much to be desired. The English had not introduced compulsory labor for the blacks when slavery was abolished. Thus the Negroes were free from the external pressure that had driven them to work. On these trips Prost everywhere saw their miserable huts, which indeed satisfied them as a protection against the sun and the rain. On account of the heat, the more the wind blew through the house, the better it was. The contented

Negroes raised some vegetables, and the sea provided them with the fish they needed. A meagre salary sufficed for their other wants. Thus they spent their life in idleness. Since the whites were the only landowners on the island, the Negroes had no prospect of acquiring property for themselves.

The discussions, which Prost had with the bishop about his work in the West Indies, turned out to be of decisive importance. First of all he was very surprised, when the bishop informed him that he could not send him to St. Thomas, because he did not dare recall the priest from St. Thomas, who had rendered such signal services and who had secured the opening of the church. Prost must therefore wait, and when St. Thomas became vacant, he could then receive it.

The bishop assigned the parish of Christiansted on the island of St. Croix as Prost's field of labor. It was the bishop's opinion that the mother-house of the Redemptorists should be established there, and that St. Thomas should be subject to it as a mission-church, because its climate was unhealthy. It seemed to be a good plan. Then bishop then went on to say, that he intended to appoint the Redemptorists to the various parishes. Prost personally realized the necessity of doing so; he did not, however, express his private opinion, but asked the bishop to allow the Redemptorists to live together, at least in the beginning. A religious community should be first legally constituted and consolidated. The bishop declared that he could not follow any other course. Thus difficulties threatened with the superiors of the Congregation.

The oath, which the Danish government required of all clergymen, brought up a question that was not easy to settle. The bishop handed Prost the formula of the oath which he would have to sign, in order to be recognized as the pastor of Christiansted by the government. It contained the general promise of obedience to the laws. But there were some laws to which a Catholic priest could not give his consent. In the first place a law stated, that in a mixed marriage between a Danish Lutheran and a Catholic woman, the marriage must be celebrated before the Protestant pastor; the law further obliged, that all the children of such a marriage were to be baptized in the Lutheran church and educated according to its teachings. But the Catholic pastor always had ways and means of deterring a Catholic woman from such a marriage. He could threaten her with exclusion from the Sacraments, if she actually entered into such a marriage. Naturally the Catholic pastor was not permitted to bless such a mixed marriage. But the pope had granted a dispensation from the impediment of clandestinity for the West Indies, so that a marriage between Catholics and Protestants, if celebrated before the Protestant minister, was indeed sinful but valid. This made it considerably easier, in case the Catholic party should later on return to the Church. Moreover a law forbade the Catholic pastor to accept a Lutheran into the Church. But it was also possible to circumvent this law. Such a convert could be sent to a neighboring English island, and there be admitted into the Church. A difficulty only arose in the case of a Lutheran who wished to become a Catholic on his death-bed.

The bishop assured Prost, that he could take the oath with a quiet conscience. He, the bishop, had sought the advice of the neighboring bishops, and they had declared that the oath was permissible. The hierarchy of France had to take a similar oath, which Rome had allowed. In spite of this assurance Prost could not make up his mind. But then he settled his doubts in the following way. The Danish government, even if Lutheran, still calls itself Christian, and accordingly recognized the universal Christian principles and particularly the principle, that God's word and law are superior to human laws. Consequently it will never intend to oblige anyone to the observance of a law, which is contrary to God's word and commandment. Prost was convinced, that he could not take this oath, if it should be required by a government that had rejected Christianity. But he regarded the oath as permissible, if it were demanded by a government, which still adhered to the fundamentals of Christianity. Besides the stipulations of the law only applied to the Lutherans of the Danish State Church. The Catholic pastor was not bound by any restrictions as far as the other sects were concerned.

The bishop also impressed upon Father Prost the instructions from Rome: in the beginning he was to conceal the fact that he was a Redemptorist, in order to avoid unnecessary difficulties. At his departure Bishop Vesque presented the newly-appointed pastor with the soutane of a secular priest. He also gave him letters of introduction to the governor of St. Croix, one to the churchwardens of Christiansted, and one to Father Timothy Ryan (13), the pastor of Frederiksted, in which he informed him that Father Prost was designated as the pastor of Christiansted, and was worthy of recommendation. In company with his vicar-general he accompanied Prost to the steamer, and bade him an affectionate farewell.

Prost had to return again to St. Thomas, because he could only reach his destination from there. Everything therefore had turned out quite differently from what he had thought, and from what Rome had informed him. He was not a little annoyed, that he could not reach the place which Rome had assigned to him. Would not serious difficulties be the result of his action? His chief regret now was, that he had not asked the bishop to send the Irish priest in Roseau as the pastor in Christiansted, and to keep himself in Roseau until St. Thomas became vacant. But that might not happen perhaps for two years or even longer. During the voyage he had already written to the North American provincial and mailed it in St. Thomas. In it he asked for a priest and a brother to be sent to St. Thomas. He now realized that he acted

(13) His name is spelled O'Ryan in the parish records.

In regard to Father Prost's criticism of Father Timothy O'Ryan (or Ryan as he calls him), he seems manifestly unfair. After all this priest spent his whole priestly life in the Virgin Islands, in spite of the hardships to which Father Prost alludes in his account. Father O'Ryan did enlarge the church, he did build a school, and after his return from Ireland he brought with him any number of articles for the church in Frederiksted. So he seems to have used the money he received for a good purpose. The parish records of Frederiksted contain very high praise of him from his successor in Frederiksted, who later became the bishop of Roseau, the Most. Rev. Michael Naughten. [*Translators note*].

very hastily. If the two should actually arrive from Baltimore, it would result in a most embarrassing situation. But if he was in Christiansted, then they could of course come to him. To send an explanation to the provincial seemed to him impossible at the time, for the mail service to Baltimore was very irregular. It was by mere chance that his first letter had been dispatched so quickly, while a new one would take at least six weeks to reach Baltimore. So he did not write again, in order not to add to the confusion.

The nearer the ship came to St. Thomas, the more clearly did the island stand out from the sea. To the eye it appeared as a high mountain-ridge in the shape of a horseshoe. The green slopes were completely dotted with houses and villas. The mountains shelter a large harbor, which is so deep that even sharks enter it. Fortifications guard the narrow entrance. The water around the island is so clear that one can see the fish far below the surface (14). Along the wharf were the large commercial stores, the government buildings, and huge emporiums. From the sea the town presents a glorious sight, similar to that of Naples and Genoa. But as soon as Prost went into the town, he was disillusioned. For there were the hovels of the Negroes, in which all lived and slept without the slightest regard for order and decency. Since there was no sewage disposal, frightful conditions prevailed, and everywhere there was an intolerable stench. The mansions of the wealthy people along the slopes of the mountain offered a magnificent view of the island and the sea.

St. Thomas lies at the juncture of the Greater and the Lesser Antilles, and far off towards the ocean. The harbor faces towards the southeast. In former days piracy flourished and was a very lucrative source of income for the town. After its suppression St. Thomas became a wealthy center of trade. Twice each month a steamer left Southampton for St. Thomas. The English had acquired control of the entire postal service, and therefore English packet-ships went from St. Thomas in all directions. The commerce with Hamburg also brought many Jews into the town. The Negroes sought to exploit the strangers. The whole territory of the island embraces only about two German square miles [thirty-two English square miles] (14^a). At that time the population of some sixteen thousand was concentrated mostly in the town. During the period of slavery there were some sugar-plantations. But as soon as slavery ended, the Negroes were no longer willing to do this kind of work. Thus on the island there were only pasture lands, truck gardens, and some dairy farms.

Many of the people spoke French, since they had come from France and from the colonies of this country in the Caribbean. Spanish too was heard. But English was the prevailing language owing to England's predominant influence. Danish was spoken only by the officials of the Danish government. Moreover Denmark had declared St. Thomas a free-port. About

(14) WUEST, *op. cit.* III 1, 382 f.

(14^a) *Calendario atlante De Agostini 1958*, Novara [1957], 408 : 70 square kilometers. [Editors note].

half of the inhabitants professed the Catholic religion. Besides the Catholics there were the Lutherans of the Danish State Church with a meetinghouse for their few members. The Anglicans possessed a beautiful church. The Moravian Brethren likewise had their own church, and were in charge of the public schools.

As soon as Prost arrived in St. Thomas he visited the Catholic priest, Father Orsini, who received him very cordially, and invited him to be his guest. He said holy Mass the next day in the church, for which he had been originally destined. It was a large building and could seat about fifteen hundred people (15), but even so it was much too small for the number of Catholics. It stood on the same avenue as the large business shops and therefore in the more refined section of the town. Directly adjoining the rear of the presbytery was a wall of solid rock (16). The church was dedicated to the Princes of the Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul; the side-altars to Our Lady of Victory and St. Joseph had magnificent marble statues. There were two small sacristies behind the side-altars. The church had enormously thick walls, but only a wooden roof. There were many high and narrow windows without glass, which were only closed with wooden shutters. The excessive heat, and the danger from earthquakes made it necessary to erect a building of this kind.

The priest in St. Thomas warned Father Prost against the pastor of Frederiksted. He was a cunning man. In his younger days Prost had often been credulous about similar remarks, and had bitterly regretted it afterwards. So he resolved that he would never believe such accusations, unless he himself had personally checked and examined them carefully. On the very same day a vessel was leaving for St. Croix, and would enable Prost to reach his new destination.

3. Activity on St. Croix (17)

South of St. Thomas lies the long-drawn island of S. Croix that runs from West to East. It comprises four German square miles [eighty-two English square miles] (17^a), and then numbered about thirty thousand inhabitants. There are mountains on the island, but none reach to any significant height. The island consists mostly of fertile hills and plains. The large sugar-plantations are the principal source of wealth. Unlike the English, the Danes introduced compulsory labor after the abolition of slavery; a law declared that vagabonds, or such as would not work, would be put into jail. But the Negroes were also employed on the magnificent sugar-plantations. A plantation was a village with the beautiful mansion of the owner or manager, and the nu-

(15) The church in St. Thomas can seat about 800, not 1500. [Translators note].

(16) The word presbytery is used throughout for the priest's residence. It is the name given to it in the Virgin Islands. [Translators note].

(17) Diary III 165-229; Expl. V 50-86.

(17^a) *Calendario atlante De Agostini 1958*, Novara [1957], 408 : 213 square kilometers. [Editors note].

merous small huts and houses of the Negroes, who were married or who lived in concubinage. In fact there was even a shortage of laborers. Thus the island had attained a certain measure of prosperity.

All the domestic animals, especially sheep and fowl, were found on the island. Small native horses and mules were generally used for work in the fields. Prost marvelled at the rich, tropical vegetation. He saw large pineapple fields, avenues of palm-trees in the streets, and fig-trees even in the woods. Oranges ripened twice a year, were very juicy, and gave off a volatile oil when they were peeled. Apples, pears and similar European fruits did not grow here, but instead there were other sweet fruits, which had a pleasing taste at first, but later seemed almost disgustingly sweet. The vine, if watered, produced an excellent crop. The grapes, which ripened twice or three times a year, were large and the berries on them were so long, that he thought of the grapes of Josue and Caleb in the Holy Land. Wine was not produced because the sugar-plantations absorbed all the laborers, and because there were no cool cellars anywhere. He found melons, that were sweeter without sugar, than those at home with sugar. The cocanut trees particularly interested him.

But there were also many poisonous plants. On the shore he saw the manchineel, a kind of apple tree, but the apples on it contained the most deadly poison. A Danish soldier ate one of these apples, boasted of its unusual sweetness, but four hours later he was a corpse. When fish were bought, one had to be careful not to take those fish that were poisonous. To distinguish them they had to be exposed to the flies. The flies never rest on poisonous fish. Fatal illnesses have often resulted from eating such fish. Therefore poisonings were no uncommon occurrence on the island. When a man intended to leave his concubine, he had to be very much on his guard. In his native land Prost had never seen the oleanders thrive so luxuriantly as they did here. He gladly used them as decorations for the church, and to cover the corners of the presbytery. Cactus hedges were planted everywhere.

In spite of all this tropical splendor, however, he did not find nature so beautiful as spring-time in his native land. But the beautiful, clear sky with its radiant blue, and with stars that sent forth a much more brilliant light afforded him a pleasure that defied comparison. Yet he also learned to know the malignant climate of the tropics. The heat was continuous, and only in the hills could one find some relief. The yellow fever as well as leprosy, and above all tuberculosis claimed many victims. On account of the heat the houses were constructed, so as to afford plenty of ventilation, while on the other hand the danger from earthquakes and hurricanes made the use of storm doors and storm windows an absolute necessity.

While the population on St. Thomas was concentrated almost exclusively in the town, on St. Croix it was scattered throughout the whole island. The moral standard here was somewhat higher than in St. Thomas, but still it left much to be desired. It was particularly true of many Negro women, that they preferred to live in concubinage rather than in marriage. For they

said : « As long as I am free, the man treats me well; but it would be totally different if I were bound to him ». Prost notes that the place was actually swarming with people who were unlawfully married.

About ten thousand of the thirty thousand inhabitants belonged to the Catholic Church; there were two parishes for them, one in each of the two towns on the island. Both parishes had about the same number of the faithful. The rest of the residents were members of the Lutheran Danish State Church, the Anglican Episcopal Church, and the Moravian Brethren. There were also some Swedenborgians and Jews.

The Lutheran pastor received a salary from the state; all the others had to support themselves, or be supported by the faithful. A queen of Denmark had been the special protector of the Moravian Brethren. In this way they secured control of the public schools in the Danish Virgin Island, but were forbidden to teach religion. The children were directed to receive religious instruction in the churches of their parents. The Danes were very much concerned about public education; they built beautiful schools, and introduced compulsory education. Only if the parents guaranteed to instruct their children themselves, were the latter free from attendance at the public schools. Where the Catholics themselves had schools, they did not need to send their children to the public schools.

The ship, on which Father Prost travelled to St. Croix during the first days of March in the second week of Lent, arrived early in the morning at Frederiksted, which is popularly called West End. From the sea this town in the western part of the island with its many green trees afforded a beautiful sight. It had no real harbor, but only an unprotected place for landing and anchoring. Prost went at once to the home of the Irish pastor, Father Ryan, in order to deliver the bishop's letter. Since Prost was no longer fasting he asked the pastor if the might assist at his Mass. The pastor went with him at once into the church, and offered the holy sacrifice. Father Ryan had already been pastor in Frederiksted for seventeen years, and had enlarged the little church. The handsome church, dedicated to St. Patrick, stood in a beautiful section of the town where enormous trees had been planted, and was enclosed by a wall.

Ryan was not very pleased with Prost's appointment as pastor of Christiansted, since he lost thereby both the administration of and the income from the second parish. But he kept his feelings to himself, and was very friendly and gracious. After breakfast he sent Prost's luggage to Christiansted by wagon. He drove the new pastor himself to the parish in his own carriage. By foot it would have been a journey of six hours. On the way Ryan began to speak about the oath, and said that he had not taken it. But Prost later learned that the formula of the oath with his signature was on file with the governor. Prost cut this conversation short by remarking, that he had his instructions from the bishop about this matter and would act accordingly.

During the trip Ryan pointed out the boundaries of the parishes to the new pastor. Shortly afterwards they came to Cliftonhill. The owner, Drohue,

was an Irish Catholic and also a warden of the church, who had to present the pastor to the governor. As Prost subsequently found out, he often drank a little too much. His wife was an excellent Catholic. Further on, before reaching Christiansted they met a wealthy English Catholic, Barrenspot, who usually resided in London. A mission chapel had been build on his large sugar-plantation. The owner invited the guests to lunch. Prost finally arrived at Christiansted.

The town was popularly known as Bassin and was named Christiansted by the Danes. It lies in the northern end of the island, but more towards the east. Christiansted possesses a large harbor like St. Thomas. Rocks form a natural wall about the harbor, so that ships are sheltered from the storms. Even the vessels from Frederiksted sought refuge here when there was danger of a storm. There was an island in the middle of the harbor. To steer ships through the narrow entrance of the harbor was a hazardous undertaking owing to the shoals and reefs. The entrance to the harbor was protected by fortifications. The people set their clocks according to the cannon shot that was fired, as in St. Thomas, at five oclock in the morning and at eight in the evening. The town was built on a gentle mountain ridge, which rises towards the south. It was cleaner, more beautiful and healthier than St. Thomas. Christiansted was the seat of government for the Danish Islands, and the place where the supreme military commander and the senior judge also resided with their subordinate officials. The Council for all the Danish Islands held its sessions here.

The Catholic church, called Holy Cross, stood on a spacious piece of land, that was indeed woefully neglected, and was surrounded by a wall. Prost was very pleased with the church which could accommodate about a thousand persons. A picture of the Blessed Virgin protected by glass, had been placed as an ornament at the back of the high altar. He found in the church everything that was needed for religious services. Thus with those he brought with him, and other new articles that he then purchased, the church was well supplied. The sexton was a Negro.

The presbytery, the coach-house, and the stable were a sorry sight. He found a bed, some chairs, two small tables and a few books. He hired an elderly colored woman, who took care of the priest's residence, as his cook, and secured lodgings for her in the neighboring house. But something very necessary for the care of souls was missing: a horse and carriage. For travelling on foot was quite impossible on account of the great heat. The Catholics were scattered over the whole island. He wanted to buy a carriage and harness from an Irishman. The price was two hundred dollars. But the man made him a gift of both, not for the parish, as he expressly declared, but for his own person. A number of the parishioners got up a subscription, and bought him a beautiful five year old grey horse.

On the day following his arrival the new pastor was presented to the governor. Prost had a letter for him from the bishop. Governor Schlegel, a

native of Schleswig-Holstein, was very friendly. He gave him permission to exercise his ministry temporarily, until the oath was delivered for his signature. A short time later the governor sent over the formula of the oath, which Father Prost had to sign. To his signature he added a letter to the governor in order to satisfy his conscience. In it he stated, that he regarded the government as Christian, and therefore took it for granted, that it would never oblige him to a law, if it was contrary to a law of God. Nothing was ever said to him about the letter. Scarcely had he sent in his signature than Prost regretted that he had given it. But what persuaded him to sign it, aside from the authority of the bishops, was the consideration, that he could only exercise his pastoral office in this way. Had he not signed, then he would have shattered the hope of establishing the Congregation in the West Indies; the Catholics would have been without a pastor, or perhaps would have had bad priests placed over them. That these reasons justified his action, he concluded from the fact, that Rome later allowed the taking of the oath.

Upon receiving the formula of the oath the governor in full regalia drove over to the presbytery, in order to welcome Father Prost as the pastor and as a citizen. Prost then made his own return call upon him. Not long afterwards Prost was invited to dinner. From that time on the governor invited him not only to official dinners, but also on many occasions to dine with him in strict privacy. Prost sought to maintain these friendly relations.

On the third Sunday of Lent Prost had his first public service in the church. Many of the faithful and also curiosity-seekers put in their appearance. After Mass the people came in groups to greet him. They asked him to remain with them. Many warned him not to offend the government on any account; others were deeply concerned about whether he would take the oath. Among his visitors there was also a convert, who had formerly been a Lutheran. He was a truly religious man and the pillar of the Catholic parish. His wife, a Creole, was likewise a fervent Catholic. Of their many children only a son, Edmund, was left to them; and he later dedicated his life to the priesthood. Schuster, a native of Holstein, became the right hand, the best counsellor, and helper of the pastor. Amid all the disturbances of former days he had kept the Sunday school in existence, and also continued to direct it under Father Prost. He always stood loyally behind the bishop, and led an upright life.

The Anglican minister, who lived opposite the presbytery, also came over to welcome the new pastor. Courtesy required a return visit. Former pastors stood on very good terms with the minister, and many Catholics suggested to Prost that he should do the same. Thus, to show their own spirit of tolerance, as they expressed it, many of them even went now and then to the Anglican services. As far as religion was concerned, they were lacking in both clarity and firmness. Prost could not approve of these principles. He did pay his return visit, but at a time when it would be impossible for him to meet the minister. When the latter found out about the sermons of Father

Prost, he no longer came to see him. After that they only saw each other now and then at official functions in the presence of the governor.

The pastor's first concern was the worthy reception of the Sacraments at Easter time. Therefore he gave an instruction each evening at six-thirty until Holy Week, which was well attended. Later indeed he believed that twice a week would have been quite sufficient, and that it would have been better, if he had devoted more time to the people in the country. Prost said holy Mass every day, was zealous in hearing confessions, and also visited the sick. On Sunday afternoons he had catechetical instructions, Vespers and Benediction. He erected a beautiful Way of the Cross with color prints from Munich. Even Protestants eagerly attended the Way of the Cross on Sunday evening; and therefore now and then he preached sermons for the benefit of the Protestants who were present at this devotion. On Saturday the confessional claimed his services for almost the entire day. For even though only about one thousand Catholics of his parish practised their religion faithfully, yet there was always plenty to do. The country-people did not have to work on Saturday, and thus they were able to drive to the market in town and sell their products. They gladly availed themselves of this opportunity to go to confession.

By taking the oath, Prost as pastor also became a member of the commission for the relief of the poor, as well as of the school commission. He could recommend the needy people of his parish for state support. There were only non-sectarian public schools, but they were forbidden to be hostile to any religion. He could visit the schools at any time, and see for himself whether any statements were being made against the Church. Before his arrival a teacher had been removed and transferred to another island, because of some disparaging remarks he had made about the Church. On Sunday the children received religious instruction in the church. He had a fairly large group of lay teachers, both men and women. They explained the meaning of the catechism to the children from one until two-thirty in the afternoon. Prost closed this class with an instruction in Christian doctrine.

The people were struck more and more by the contrast between the two pastors. Father Ryan maintained, it is true, a strict external discipline in his parish; in his dealings with others he was a perfect gentleman, and also showed himself polite and friendly towards Prost, and Prost reciprocated with his love and friendship. But as a rule he only celebrated Mass on Sunday, preached once or at most twice a month. He was utterly lacking in apostolic zeal. Bishop Vesque was not yet acquainted with him, and therefore had not given Father Prost any confidential information concerning him.

Ryan knew all about the methods of taxing the people and making money, while Prost was satisfied with what the people freely gave. He followed this same principle even with regard to weddings and for a very good reason. He wanted to make it impossible for those living in concubinage to claim that they could not get married, because they were unable to pay the necessary fee. It was likewise his practise not to allow women into his house. Accord-

ing to the custom of the country the kitchen was located in the yard; thus even the elderly black woman, who served as his cook, did not set foot in the house. A prominent landowner remarked, that he had considered it impossible, that there could be no suspicion as to a priest's moral conduct. But since Father Prost had been among them, he had changed his mind completely. This also made Prost acceptable to the government.

Then the rumor arose that he was a Jesuit in disguise. He was asked where he had been stationed formerly. He replied that he had conducted religious services in the home of the Comte de Chambord at Frohsdorf (18). But this did not satisfy the people. Father Ryan now sought to ferret it out. He naively spoke of the report circulating among the people. Prost merely laughed and said that they had all sorts of silly ideas. He was not worthy of being a Jesuit. And so Ryan, too, could throw no light on the matter. But yet he could not conceal the fact that he was a Redemptorist indefinitely. His passport simply described him as a priest and an apostolic missionary. Yet he also had to bear in mind, that upon the receipt of his letter Redemptorists would be coming here from Baltimore. Again the priests in the bishop's residence were aware of his identity as a priest in a religious order. Besides many of his parishioners corresponded with Father Butler, the former pastor. It was to be expected that they would mention Prost's name when writing to him in Dublin, and Prost was known throughout the whole of Ireland as a missionary and a Redemptorist. Unpleasant results might follow, if the government found out in a roundabout way that he was a Redemptorist. So he devised the following plan.

From now on when writing to the government he added the four letters to his signature, C.S.S.R. A great riddle-contest then began among the members of the government, who were reluctant, however, to question him officially. One of their number, a Catholic, came to see him in regard to the marriage of his daughter in Puerto Rico. On this occasion he inquired into the meaning of these letters. Prost expressed his surprise that they had asked him point blank. For his benefit he wrote that the letters meant Congregatio Sanctissimi Redemptoris. But this explanation also failed to solve the mystery.

Now he was summoned to the governor's office. Here he stated plainly that he was a Redemptorist. With some agitation the governor inquired why he had not done so before. Prost answered simply that no one had asked him about it, otherwise he would have given a complete explanation. The governor put the further question, why Prost pretended to be a secular priest. Prost replied that he had never explicitly referred to himself as a secular priest; but as a matter of fact he could do so with a good conscience. For in the ecclesiastical documents the Redemptorists were designated as a society of secular priests, who wished to help the poor, abandoned and ignorant

(18) Frohsdorf is situated near Katzelsdorf. Comte de Chambord (1820-1883) lived there in a castle. He was the Bourbon claimant to the throne of France.

Catholics. It was for this purpose that he had come to St. Croix. The governor remarked to Prost that he considered him a disguised Jesuit. Prost declared, that the Redemptorists and the Jesuits did not belong to the one institute, for the General of the Jesuits could not issue an order to them. The only bond of unity with the Jesuits was, that the pope is the highest superior of both the Jesuits and the Redemptorists.

The governor was of the opinion, that the Redemptorists then at least followed Jesuitical principles. To this Prost retorted, that the principles of the Jesuits did not differ from those of other Catholics, and that these principles were based on the catechism. The so-called « Jesuitical principles » were to a large extent pure fabrication. If the principles of the Jesuits were so dangerous to the state, then it was difficult to understand why King Frederick II of Prussia and Catherine II of Russia had received them into their countries. The governor believed that the expulsion of the Redemptorists from Austria could be cited as a proof of how dangerous the Redemptorists were. Prost pointed out that this was a measure passed during a revolution. Finally the governor was satisfied to let things remain as they were. Prost saw an act of Providence in his coming to St. Croix and not to St. Thomas. For here he could discuss the difficulties that arose with the governor in person, and the government could closely observe his own manner of acting.

He sought to avoid everything that might lead to a conflict with the government in regard to mixed marriages. In his sermons he explained the teaching of the Church about marriage and contracting marriage, warned against mixed marriages, and begged the people not to enter into them, in order to stay clear of difficulties with the government. But he likewise mentioned that such a marriage was valid even though sinful. This made a good impression on the government.

Furthermore, Prost sought to remove from the governor's mind the fear, that he aimed at the conversion of the Lutherans to the Catholic Church. Prost declared, that he naturally wanted the Lutherans also to return again to the Church from which they had separated. But the situation among the Catholics on the island was such, that he would have to devote all of his energy into making them respectable Catholics. The Irish priest had labored with a special predilection for conversions. Since the governor himself was validly married, he was particularly pleased with Father Prost's efforts to put an end to concubinage. In this matter the labors of Prost were fully appreciated by the governor and the members of the government. Thus his efforts to avoid any conflict with the government, his religious zeal, and his policy regarding the question of money recommended Prost to government circles and to the good Catholics. The officials and also all the landowners on the island always showed themselves very friendly and polite towards Prost; the military commander was especially devoted to him. This high esteem was to find unique expression.

The legislative assembly of the Danish Islands let it be known to Prost.

in strict confidence, that he should apply for support, for it was ready to grant him an annual salary of eight hundred dollars. The preceding pastor, Father Butler, had received this salary. For, when the Negroes rose in rebellion in 1848, and held the island in their power for three days and the whites had to escape to the ships, Father Butler went to the Negroes and persuaded them to make peace. Out of gratitude the government voted him the annual stipend of eight hundred dollars. When the government ascertained that Prost was also very acceptable to the Negroes, it wanted to grant him the same allowance. But Prost declined, thanking them at the same time for the high value they still placed on his services. Prost, to be sure, had made his own calculations. For although he received only free-will offerings, yet this amounted to some twelve hundred dollars. If the people learned that he was now drawing a salary from the government, it was only to be expected, that there would be a notable falling-off in the voluntary contributions.

Negroes made up a large part of his parish. Therefore Prost also had to include them in his pastoral labors. It was the will of God, he declared in his sermons, that the Negroes should also arrive at the knowledge of the truth and be saved. Certainly slavery was wrong and was to be condemned, but yet it was the way by which Providence had led many Negroes to Christianity, which they would not have learned to know in Africa. But a heavy guilt lay on the conscience of those whites, who became a stumbling-block and a scandal to the Negroes; above all, he branded it as a sin and a disgrace that Europeans lived in concubinage, or else had immoral relations with black women.

The Negroes soon realized that Father Prost had their best interest at heart. He was also a good shepherd to them. They were not accustomed to being treated so by the whites. But they also showed themselves very grateful in return. When Prost rode out into the country, they shouted even when he was still far away « Papa is coming », and ran in from the fields in order to welcome him. The Negroes had their own catechists. These men and women instructed them in their religion, and also collected the free-will offerings for the pastor. He received a large part of his income from the Negroes. This brought to his mind a maxim of the Prince-Bishop, Roman Zaengerle, at the time of his ordination: « If you insist on putting your hand into the peasant's bag, he holds the bag tight; but if you conquer his heart, then he himself opens the bag and gives to you ».

Many Europeans in the parish believed that Prost was proceeding too aggressively, and must inevitably be drawn into a conflict with the government. Prost told them that he was a Catholic priest, and would act as such. He wanted peace, but at the same time he would not sacrifice Catholic principles and his Catholic point of view. This applied particularly to the Irish Catholics. At first they showed themselves very friendly, and cordially invited him to visit their home and to dine with them. But Prost soon noted

that very many were living in concubinage. Of course he stayed away from them, and thereby made them his enemies. Thus the wealthy merchant Roche lived with a Negro woman, and had the children in his house. Because Prost no longer came to visit him, Roche became his bitter enemy.

While the Negroes lived openly in concubinage, most of the Europeans tried to keep it a secret. It was for this reason, naturally, that Prost first inveighed against the concubinage among the Negroes. He persuaded many of them to be validly married, and every Sunday he had some weddings. When he learned about the actual conditions among the Europeans he could not and would not keep silent any longer. He pointed out the grave scandal and disgrace, which lay in the immoral liaison between Europeans and Negro girls and women. He never mentioned anyone by name. Many did not break off this illicit relationship, and accused Prost before the governor of undermining authority. But the governor expressed himself as satisfied, when Prost explained his side of the case. Other Irishmen amended their lives. They now admitted that the pastor was perfectly right, that it was a disgrace for a Catholic Irishman to live in such a way. One of these men who reformed told him how an Irishman, who lived in concubinage with a black woman, wanted to sell his own son as a slave. Prost got to know the young man himself.

In order to preserve and strengthen the faith Prost also started a free or lending library. He was convinced that it was not sufficient to preach against evil literature. Like St. Clement Hofbauer he considered it much more important to make it possible for the people to read good books of every kind. In his opinion such a library should contain, besides recreational literature, books on the different branches of learning. In a free library for Catholics provision had naturally to be made for suitable books of a religious nature. He established this library on the groundfloor of the presbytery, in that room which was accessible to everybody. Four men gave a doubloon each, which amounted to thirty-two guilders of the old Austrian silver coinage. Later on he received other donations for the same purpose. He found a few books in the presbytery; he himself brought many with him; the provincial of Baltimore sent him some. But he bought most of them from a book-store in London, for English was the prevailing language on the island. He reserved the arrangement of the books to himself. He appointed the supervisors, who had charge of the lending of the books and kept a record of the cost. The smallest price was charged for the loan of a book. Thus it was also possible for the poor people to avail themselves of the lending library. This money was used for the purchase of books. At his departure the library numbered over four hundred volumes.

Even Protestants were eager to borrow these books, and some conversions were the result. The cousin of the Lutheran minister was brought into the Church through books from this Catholic library. The circumstances required her to be baptized conditionally. Now according to Danish law re-baptism was a crime, and conditional Baptism was likewise included under this head-

ing. Hence there was danger of a conflict with the government. Prost instructed the convert and accepted her profession of faith. He made the following arrangements for her conditional Baptism. This convert had a very reliable friend. Prost instructed her about this Baptism, and she now performed the Baptism privately. The mother of the convert and a gentleman came to Father Prost, in order to demand an explanation. She asked him who had given him the right to receive her daughter into the Catholic Church. Prost replied that God had given him not only the right but the obligation of doing so. When she inquired why this was done without her knowledge, Prost answered that he respected her authority as a mother very much, but the authority of God even more, who desires us to follow what we know to be the truth. Furthermore, liberty of conscience demands that this freedom should also be granted to the convert. The mother declared that she would appeal to the government. Prost quietly remarked that this course was open to her, and that he was also ready to abide by the consequences. He had considered the whole question very carefully.

The mother now actually filed a complaint with the government. A short time later the convert was summoned to court, and the following conversation ensued:

Judge: « Do you wish to become a Catholic? »

Convert: « I am one already. »

Judge: « Who persuaded you to this step? »

Convert: « No one. I enjoy reading. The Catholic pastor has a lending library. I borrowed some books, and through reading them I became convinced that the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ. Since there is only one true Church of Christ, I asked the Catholic pastor to receive me into the Catholic Church. »

Judge: « Did the Catholic pastor baptize you? »

Convert: « I was baptized as a child in the Lutheran Church. I will not be baptized a second time, since the Catholic Church declares that the repetition of Baptism or re-baptism is a crime, just as the Danish laws do. Moreover the Church teaches that any man, whether he is a Christian or not, can validly baptize, provided that he observes what Christ has prescribed. »

Judge: « But I had always heard, that the Catholic priests baptize everyone whom they receive into the Church. »

Convert: « They do so only if the one being received has not been validly baptized before. »

Judge: « Then I have not been correctly informed about this matter. »

Convert: « That is so. »

With this she was let go. The judge was a man of liberal views, and by no means hostile to Father Prost. The whole affair was probably distasteful to him personally, and he was glad that it could end as it did. Later on the

convert's mother and sister often came into the Catholic church, and eventually they themselves became Catholics.

A young unmarried Lutheran, who was the head of his family, likewise came over to the Church through the lending library. He became tubercular, and the sickness took such a bad turn that he was brought to the brink of the grave. When Prost returned home one Sunday evening about nine o'clock, messengers from the sick man were waiting for him. They asked him to go with them at once, as the sick man wanted to become a Catholic, and there was danger that he might die that very night. Prost asked whether the sick man himself had expressed this desire. Upon receiving an affirmative answer, he declared that he would come immediately. But then the messengers full of anxiety remarked: « But what will the government say? » Prost answered them laconically: « The government may say what it wants. I am fulfilling my duty and my obligation, and I shall also gladly suffer the consequences. »

The sick man had an aunt, who took the place of a mother in the home and was a militant Lutheran. When Prost came, she was in the ante-room with a number of other people. Prost and a Catholic woman entered the sick man's room. Within an hour the conversion was completed. In this case he himself had to administer the conditional Baptism and the other Sacraments. But he omitted all the ceremonies, for he could not help being apprehensive, that the Lutheran aunt would call in the Protestant minister. He was able to finish everything in good time.

But the thought of the great commotion, that would now follow, worried him. At holy Mass he cast all his care upon the Lord. There it occurred to him, that it would perhaps be best, if he at once sent a complete report to the governor. Immediately after his thanksgiving he wrote a letter to the governor, and gave him an account of everything that had happened, without any mention, however, of the conditional Baptism. He explained that in the day-time he would have come to the governor and asked his permission. But he could not do so, since he had been summoned at night. Delay was impossible, because the man's death was momentarily expected during the night. Therefore trusting to the humanity of the governor he had performed his duty as a Catholic priest. This report forestalled any denunciations. The sick man lived fourteen days longer. Prost visited him daily, and was also able to bury him with due solemnity.

Another conflict arose on account of a concubinage. A Lutheran man and a Catholic woman were living together as man and wife though not lawfully married. Prost did his utmost to persuade both of them to enter into a valid marriage, and also succeeded in doing so. The man promised everything that the Church requires in the case of a mixed marriage. Prost asked the man to what denomination he belonged. The man declared that he was a Protestant. Now the term Protestant was quite generally understood on the island as referring only to the Anglicans. The law regarding mixed marriages did not apply to them, but only to the adherents of the Lutheran Danish State Church. But what Prost did not know, was that the man had previously

promised to marry someone else. The woman in question now had the man brought to court for breach of promise. At the trial it was brought out for the first time, that the man was a Lutheran. Thus the marriage was a clear violation of the law. The pastor immediately received an official letter from the government, demanding him to justify his action. Prost appealed to the man's own statement, which he had affirmed in the presence of two witnesses. Prost therefore could not be charged with a deliberate violation of the law.

A further document from the government required him to send the married couple to the Lutheran minister; in the latter's presence they were to declare that they would have all their children baptized and brought up in the Lutheran faith. They were likewise ordered to pay the wedding-fee to the Lutheran pastor. Prost was given eight days to think the matter over. If the command were not carried out, then criminal proceedings would have to be started against him. Prost made no attempt to inform the couple, for he was afraid that out of pity for him they would comply with the government's demands. So he let the eight days pass by. On the eighth day he gave his answer in writing. He would be acting against his conscience, if he demanded such a thing of the married couple. He had not knowingly broken the law. The Lutheran minister had made no effort to put an end to the concubinage. He had done so, and thereby had certainly performed a good deed. He saw no reason at all why he should be punished for a good deed.

To this explanation the government replied, that it would overlook everything, but that the Lutheran pastor must have the wedding-fee. Prost now sent two of the churchwardens to the pastor in order to pay the money. He received them very graciously, said he was not responsible for the existing laws, and asked them to return the money to the Catholic pastor, who could distribute it among the needy members of his church. Prost received nothing for the marriage-ceremony, but had drawn the money from his own funds.

A new conflict arose on account of a marriage announcement. An Irish landowner from an otherwise good Catholic family lost his wife. He wanted to marry again and chose a Protestant widow, who stipulated, however, that it must be a Protestant wedding. The man did not say a word to the pastor; Prost heard of it only from the people. Then the government notified him, that he was to make a public announcement of this marriage, as was required by law. Such a demand had never been made previously. It was also impossible for him to comply with it according to the prescribed form. Then he hit upon the following way of getting out of the difficulty. On Sunday he said from the pulpit that he had heard that the Catholic gentleman N.N. intended to marry the Protestant woman N.N., and that they planned to be married Protestant. Then he pointed out, how such mixed marriages are contrary to the law of the Church, and how dangerous they are to one's faith and eternal salvation. He stressed the fact, that the marriage of a Catholic before a Protestant minister was a public denial of the Catholic faith, and urged the parishioners to pray for the man, that he might come

to a better frame of mind. He had indeed announced the marriage, but in such a form that he was never afterwards required to carry out such an unreasonable request.

The poor man lived but a short time with his Protestant wife. On one Sunday he went with her to the Protestant church, and on the next Sunday she had to go with him to the Catholic church. Finally, one morning the man cut his throat with a razor, and even the Protestant minister refused to bury the suicide.

Prost composed a special brochure about all of his conflicts with the government. He wished in this way to give the Catholic people the correct principles about the various points of controversy. Before printing the brochure had to be submitted to the judge, who had presided at the convert's trial. Protests were sent to him, alleging that the pamphlet was directed against Protestantism. But the judge declared, that the Protestant pastors should answer it, and that there was to be a free discussion. And therefore the brochure was allowed to be printed, and Prost distributed it among the Catholics (19).

Father Prost had hardly been in Christiansted more than a few weeks when Father Ryan, the pastor of Frederiksted, made use of the opportunity and asked the bishop for a leave of absence, in order to make a trip to Europe. The bishop granted him a six months' vacation, and entrusted the administration of the parish to Father Prost.

Therefore Prost had to conduct two services every Sunday. On one Sunday he said an early Mass in Christiansted and a later one in Frederiksted. This order was reversed on the following Sunday. He had to start immediately after the early service in order to reach the other church. At such times he had less to suffer from hunger than from thirst on account of the hot climate. That many sick persons died without the last Sacraments was inevitable under these circumstances, though he did his utmost to prevent it. For the messenger had to make a six hour trip to Christiansted, and by the time Prost arrived in Frederiksted, he found that many of the sick were already dead. He also heard confessions on alternate Saturdays in the two parishes.

Father Ryan had hardly started on his vacation after Easter, when the priest in St. Thomas left the parish and the diocese. Prost did not learn the reason for his action. The bishop informed Father Prost that he himself and a young Irish priest were coming to St. Thomas. Bishop Vesque rented a house in St. Thomas, and put forth every effort to win over the schismatics. In order that the latter might not be offended, he did not even visit the loyal Catholics. The woman whom he hired as a cook was a schismatic. He con-

(19) Diary III 186. He says that he kept a copy for himself, but loaned it Father Masson, who did not send it back. Then he jotted down the essential facts to the best of his recollection, and placed them with his other writings; but they are no longer to be found among these documents, and therefore seem to have been lost.

ducted the religious services, and catechized the children in order to prepare them for confirmation. Neither in the pulpit nor in private conversation did he mention the schism, but spoke and preached as if nothing had happened. He treated everyone with the greatest charity. But in spite of this he was hated by all the schismatics, and all the love he lavished upon them proved to be of no avail. The schismatics had no grounds for complaint against Bishop Vesque. For at the beginning of the schism he was still living as a priest in England. Even the return of the church to the Catholics was not due to him. But the Freemasons, to whom many of the schismatics also belonged, did not want peace in the parish.

Prost visited the bishop in St. Thomas, and marvelled at his humility, condescension and apostolic zeal. The bishop was especially hopeful, that the schism would surely come to an end, if the Redemptorists could one day take over the care of souls in St. Thomas. Prost did not share these sanguine hopes. He declared, that it was easier to convert the pagans than schismatics and bad Catholics. Furthermore, the Redemptorists were certain of meeting with great difficulties in attempting a foundation. Bishop Vesque told Father Prost that he could now take possession of the parish of St. Thomas; he would send the young priest to be the vicar in Christiansted. Prost was very well pleased at hearing this, as it would enable him to come to the place for which he had been originally destined. He now began to give serious thought to the foundation. But naturally he had to return soon again to his two parishes.

He was back in Christiansted but a short time, when he received the news that Father Dold and a lay-brother had come from North America. Upon receiving Father Prost's letter the provincial of Baltimore, Father George Ruland, had appointed Father Louis Dold, who was the professor of dogma in the seminary at Cumberland, and two lay-brothers, Henry Voss and Vincent Soleau, for the mission in St. Thomas. They set out on April 22. Since there was no regular steam-ship service between New York and St. Thomas at that time, they had to take a sailing vessel. During the journey Brother Vincent contracted smallpox, was given the last Sacraments, and died on May 10. His body was buried at sea. Both the captain as well as the Redemptorists had much to put up with on account of this case of smallpox.

On the very next day, May 11, the vessel entered the harbor of St. Thomas, but was placed in quarantine for a period of five days. From aboard ship Father Dold notified Father Prost of his arrival (20). Father Dold had scarcely come into the town when the bishop joyfully wrote to Father Prost that God had sent him a priest for St. Thomas. From this Prost understood that Father Dold was to remain in St. Thomas. Prost was not at all pleased with this arrangement. For according to his plan Father Dold should come to St. Croix, and the bishop should provide for St. Thomas in some other way. Only when further reinforcements came from America, should St. Tho-

(20) WUEST, *op. cit.* III 2, 3; BYRNE, *op. cit.* 511.

mas be taken over by the Redemptorists. Prost's aim was to have a real canonical foundation for the Redemptorists, and he was therefore opposed to sending the fathers to separate parishes. The bishop seemed to believe, that he could assign the fathers to parishes, just as if they were secular priests. Prost protested against this in a letter to the bishop. He realized, of course, the futility of his protest, but did not want to take the responsibility upon himself.

The provincial, Father Ruland, must have concluded from the letter in February that Father Prost was in St. Thomas, and consequently sent his little colony to that place. At any rate Father Dold was convinced that he should remain in St. Thomas, and that such was the will of the provincial. The bishop named him pastor of the island without any prior consultation with Father Prost, and Father Dold accepted without first coming to an understanding with Father Prost.

Immediately after this he and brother Henry paid a visit to Father Prost in Christiansted. Prost saw that he was here faced with a simple fait accompli, which he could no longer change. Since the West Indies came directly under Father General, he sent a report of the events to Rome, and waited for its decision. In his judgment it would have been better, if Father Dold had remained as his assistant in Christiansted, and the bishop had left the young priest in St. Thomas. But Bishop Vesque required the latter on the island of St. Christopher. Prost, however, kept Brother Henry with himself. He needed a procurator and sacristan, while there was a sexton in St. Thomas.

Brother Henry had charge of the temporalities of the house, kept the accounts, and took care of the church. By his friendliness, his quiet ways, and his even temper he won the love of the parishioners. He stood loyally by Father Prost in all the conflicts. The pastor gladly availed himself of his services for emergency Baptisms and for the funerals of the laborers in the country. On this account complaints were lodged against him in Rome. Prost justified himself by pointing out, that he was the only priest for the thousands who were scattered throughout the island. He was sufficiently occupied with the administration of the Sacraments. Every sugar-plantation had its own cemetery. It was simply impossible for him to drive out for each funeral, as it also was for each emergency Baptism. According to a statute of the ecclesiastical province, Baptism in case of necessity could only be administered at home. If the child lived, it had to be brought to the church in order that ceremonies might be supplied. He was not introducing a new custom, but simply continuing the custom of his predecessors. This explanation was satisfactory, and everything was allowed to continue as formerly. Father Prost made morning meditation quite regularly with Brother Henry, except when he was called away during the night to administer the last rites, which happened very frequently.

Father Dold returned again to St. Thomas after his visit with Father Prost. Then the bishop and the Irish priest appeared in St. Croix. The bishop

paid his respects to the governor, and on the very next day the Lutheran governor drove in state to the presbytery in order to make a return-call. He gave a dinner in the bishop's honor, to which besides the pastor all the prominent Catholics were also invited. The services in the church were conducted with great solemnity before a large congregation. Since there were only two priests a pontifical Mass could not be celebrated, but a Mass was said in the presence of the bishop, which the people had never seen before. The bishop conferred the holy Sacrament of Confirmation. The people wanted to be confirmed without ever having received Holy Communion. They cited the fact, that such had always been their custom, and that the bishops had allowed it. Prost protested against it, and declared that the Sacrament of Confirmation must be received in the state of grace. But whoever failed to make his Easter duty through his own fault was not in the state of grace, and could not be confirmed. In this way he compelled the parents to let their children be prepared for their first holy Communion.

The bishop spent a week in Christiansted, and then went to Frederiksted, where the pastor was still away on his leave of absence. Here the bishop with the Irish priest took care of everything himself, prepared the children and the adults for holy Confirmation, heard the confessions, and administered the holy Sacrament of Confirmation.

Afterwards the bishop paid another short visit to St. Thomas, and then travelled to the island of St. Christopher, where there were Catholics living without a church or a priest. The young companion, whom he appointed as their pastor, was to build a church for them. The bishop had felt sick even while in St. Thomas, and died on July 10, 1858, four days after his arrival in St. Christopher. A rumor was circulated that he had been poisoned in St. Thomas, but Father Prost did not believe it. Even Protestants showed every mark of respect for the dead man, and they had been edified by his pious death. His body was brought back to his episcopal city of Roseau, and later on to the church attached to the Sisters' convent in London, where he had labored for twelve years. He had been a bishop for scarcely two years, and died as the victim of his zeal. Prost pronounced the following judgment upon him: « He was a saint. And therefore his zeal was so ardent, that he wanted to correct everything at once. And for this reason he decided upon measures, which needed to be considered much more carefully. He would have met with many difficulties and great vexation. But God freed him from them all and took him to Himself » (21).

Prost is alluding here to one particular difficulty. That is to say, Bishop Vesque had informed him, that he intended to have all the priests of his diocese submit an exact account of all the money they received, and how it was spent. Every year the bishop received twenty-five thousand francs from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Lyons, which was not sufficient, however, for the needs of his diocese. There were a number of poor churches and parishes in his diocese; other places were without churches

(21) Expl. V 73.

and priests. His best parishes were those in the Danish Islands, and until recently the pastors there had enriched themselves. Now the bishop wanted to tax the richer parishes according to their income. The bishop needed very little for himself, since he lived very simply. One could foresee that he would also require his priests to practise economy. As regards the Redemptorists he believed that they were obliged to the greatest frugality by their vow of poverty. So it was among them that he hoped to gain his greatest success. Therefore he would have liked to have staffed as many of his parishes as possible with the Redemptorists. This plan also shows, that he had definitely made up his mind, that the Redemptorists were not to live together in a separate community, but were to be assigned to parishes. This would necessarily lead to conflicts with the Redemptorist General.

But Prost was likewise opposed to the bishop's scheme for other reasons. First of all he believed, that it would put a burden only on the loyal and conscientious priests, for the others would doubtless send in a fictitious account to the bishop. Moreover, there were no benefices anywhere in the diocese, from which the bishop by canon law could claim certain revenues. In the West Indies there were only Mass stipends, stole fees, and free-will offerings, of which the bishop here could demand no strict accounting. Prost maintained, that he should have been satisfied with encouraging them to make voluntary contributions. But he was reluctant to express his opinion about this tax before it was actually promulgated, and therefore remained silent. But this plan was also buried with the bishop, and his successors never revived it.

After the death of Bishop Vesque his vicar-general became the vicar-capitular. Prost soon heard the report that a Redemptorist was to become the bishop of Roseau. He at once thought of Father Coffin, the rector in London. But then he learned, that he himself was being considered for the bishopric, and that Monsignor Talbot had proposed his name to Pius IX. But Propaganda raised objections to this plan. Because the climate and especially the yellow fever were so dangerous to Europeans, they now wanted one, who had already become acclimated, to be appointed bishop. The choice fell on the French monsignor, Michael Poirier. He belonged to the Congregation of the Eudists, and was older than Father Prost. He had already labored for twenty years as a pastor and as a confessor of nuns on the island of Trinidad, and enjoyed the full confidence of Archbishop Spaccapietra, upon whom Pius IX placed great reliance. He had become so accustomed to the climate, that Italy was much too cold for him. He had been in Rome some years before, and Pius IX had made him a monsignor. He was now consecrated as the Bishop of Roseau by Archbishop Spaccapietra. At the dinner the archbishop proposed a toast to the health of the new bishop. All stood up, only the Irishmen remained seated. They were annoyed because an Irishman had not become the bishop. Prost soon sent his own letter in which he assured the bishop of his loyalty. The bishop replied in a very friendly

manner, and emphasized the fact, that he would discuss the question of the foundation with the General, Father Mauron, whom he knew personally (22):

Father Dold began his labors on St. Thomas. He had to remain wholly incognito in the beginning, but later on could appear as a secular priest. He lived in the little house near the church, which the wardens had already rented for his predecessor. His position was a very difficult one, for according to the Danish laws, decisions were made by the majority vote of the parishioners. In Christiansted the majority of the people through their churchwardens had accepted Father Prost as the pastor sent by the bishop; he had taken the oath; and was officially recognized as the pastor by the government. Therefore Prost could nominate and depose the churchwardens. The situation in St. Thomas was entirely different. The great majority of the parish was schismatic, and had the wardens on their side. In fact they formed a kind of independent ecclesiastical government. When the church was restored to the Catholics, they confiscated the parish records as well as about six to seven thousand dollars of the church funds.

Father Dold, therefore, was not regarded by the government as the pastor of St. Thomas, but only as a minister of religion for a small group of people. As such he was tolerated by the government, and since St. Thomas was a free port, he was not required to take the oath. But on the other hand he did not possess the right of nominating the wardens of his church. By chance the government had appointed three good men, one of whom, however, was a Freemason. Father Dold's sexton had only gone to confession once in his life, and had never received holy Communion. The churchwardens allowed Father Dold a considerable measure of freedom. They collected the pew rent from some four hundred Catholics, and used it to pay for the priests's residence, the church-choir and the sexton. But the situation could be changed very easily into an unfavorable one for Father Dold, if the government appointed other churchwardens. He himself drew no salary, but received so much in stole fees, that he could even save a great deal of it.

The thirty-seven year old Belgian, Father Dold, began his apostolate with true zeal and enthusiastic hopes. He also spoke French, English and German, and in addition now learned Spanish. In order to gain the good will of the schismatics he did not visit the loyal Catholics except in cases of sickness or on official business. But the schismatics remained obdurate, and the loyal Catholics were offended by being treated in this way. If a schismatic greeted him, he believed that he had already won him over to the Church. Because some formerly indifferent and careless Catholics appeared at the services in the church more regularly, he began to think that the schismatics would gradually come back.

At Christmas he made arrangements for a very impressive celebration. He erected a beautiful crib, and invited everyone to the midnight Mass. He related the story from S. Alphonsus, how at a most critical moment Captain Alphonsus Albuquerque had lifted up an innocent child to heaven and said:

(22) Diary III 200 f.; Expl. V 73.

« O Lord, if I am indeed unworthy of being heard, hear at least the tears of this child and save us. » Then Father Dold went over to the crib, raised the Christ-child to heaven, and prayed that the schism might end (23). As a result there were some conversions, and this was a notable achievement in view of the low religious and moral conditions in the parish. He was able to renovate the church and sacristy and set up a school (24).

It was the intention of Father General, under whom the whole mission was placed, that a real religious foundation was to be made. And therefore he decided that the fathers should be united together in one place, either in St. Thomas or in St. Croix. He preferred St. Croix, and named Father Prost as superior. But for the present the General allowed them to live on both islands, and continue their pastoral activity.

The great controversy, which revealed the two opposing viewpoints, now began. Father Dold energetically espoused the cause of St. Thomas, and believed it to be the proper field of labor for the Congregation. Father Prost, on the contrary, regarded St. Thomas as unsuitable for a foundation, and pressed more for St. Croix. The obstinacy of the heretics, the great power of the Freemasons and the Jews, the precarious situation with regard to the government, the dependence upon men who were appointed as churchwardens by the government, and the unhealthy climate seemed, in his opinion, to militate against the success of a foundation in St. Thomas. These drawbacks were not found in St. Croix, and besides the attachment of the people there, together with the good will of the government, seemed to offer a safer guarantee and to be favorable auguries for such a foundation. It was possible that in Rome they might draw a wholly erroneous conclusion from this fundamental opposition, as if the two men could not work together, and live in harmony with each other. But Father Dold visited Father Prost very often, and the latter came to St. Thomas very often.

The negotiations between Bishop Poirier and Archbishop Spaccapietra on the one side and Father General on the other finally ended in a settlement. Father Prost received a detailed account of it in a letter from Father General. The Congregation assumed the care of souls in the Danish Islands. A Redemptorist was already stationed on St. Thomas and St. Croix. The parish of Frederiksted was to be entrusted to the Congregation when the pastor, Father Ryan, either resigned or died. St. John, the largest of the Danish Islands, was so unproductive that it numbered only eight hundred inhabitants; the few Catholics on this island were to be attended to by St. Thomas. Similarly the few Catholics on the English island of Tortola were assigned to the parish of St. Thomas. The Superior General had the authority to recall the fathers and to send others, whom the bishop could examine in order to find out if they were qualified. Because the fathers were pastors,

(23) *Analecta C.S.S.R.* VII (1928) 151 f.

(24) Fr. Dold, as far as I could make out from the records, did not set up a Catholic school. Fr. Buggenoms deserves the credit for the first such school. [*Translators note*].

the superior should bear the title of an episcopal vicar-general, and also receive the faculties attached to this office, in order that the fathers might be subject to him in every respect. The bishop agreed to all of these terms, and sent a signed copy to Father Prost. The General took upon himself the obligation of sending the requisite number of fathers.

The question of the foundation seemed to be nearing a definite solution. There lived in St. Thomas the wealthy family named Lange, whose father had contributed very generously towards the church and the Catholic cemetery (25). This family was regarded as the leader of the loyal Catholics, and therefore was singled out by the schismatics as the special target of their hatred. By the year 1858 the father and mother were already dead and most of the children married. Only the oldest son, the head of the family, was still single. A younger brother was a priest. He had served for a while as the secretary to the Archbishop of Trinidad, but returned to his family's home in St. Thomas, because he was suffering from a lung-ailment. A close friendship sprang up between Father Dold and Father Lange. The latter learned from Father Dold that Father Prost was thinking of establishing the first house of the Congregation on St. Croix. This displeased him just as it did Father Dold. Both took steps to prevent it with the bishop as well as in Rome. In the autumn of 1858 Father Prost received a letter from Father Dold, stating that the house behind the church could be acquired for the Congregation. Prost left at once for St. Thomas, and a young Irish priest took his place in Christiansted.

Above the rock, adjacent to the church in St. Thomas, stood a house that commanded a magnificent view of the harbor. Father Dold was eager to complete the purchase at once, but Father Prost could not grant this request. For, first of all, he had no authority from Rome to do so, and secondly, he did not have the money. Two thousand and eight hundred dollars (\$2,800.00) were required. Besides, the Congregation could not acquire property, because it was not recognized by the government. Then Father Lange offered the sum of three thousand dollars. The house was to be bought with this money in the name of the bishop, who would then transfer it to the Congregation. Everything seemed to be taken care of, but at the last moment everything again came to naught.

The bishop's authorization was required for the purchase of the house. Then suddenly Father Dold protested against buying the house in the name of the bishop. Since Father Lange spoke only French, and Prost had but an imperfect knowledge of French, he could not join in the conversation. Father Lange was very much annoyed at Dold's action, and walked away. Prost tried to pacify him, but, alas, to no avail. Lange left soon afterwards for Puerto Rico. Even during the course of the negotiations he expressed his regrets, that he had considered Father Dold alone as the pastor of St. Thomas,

(25) There may have been thought of starting a Catholic cemetery, but there never has actually been one in St. Thomas. Even our Fathers, who died in the 1860s, were buried in the public cemetery. [*Translators note*].

and had taken but scant notice of his superior in Christiansted. Prost explained to him, that Dold was independent of him in the external forum, and therefore he could not intervene. Thereupon Lange wrote to the bishop of Roseau, and suggested that he should name Father Prost as the vicar-general for both islands. This was immediately done. Rome consented to the acceptance of this office. Thus Prost now possessed the highest authority on the islands. The bishop was also very displeased with Father Dold's manner of acting. The latter now rented the house that they had wanted to buy. Prost was ordered to return to St. Croix and to remain there.

In the autumn of 1858 Father Francis Krutil, who had left the Austrian province for North America in 1843, now came to Father Prost in St. Croix. He remained three months without being obliged to take the oath. The bishop's arrival was expected, and therefore the government did not want to become involved in any conflict. It connived at this action for a while longer in January, but then set a definite date. Father Krutil absolutely refused to sign the oath, and all of Father Prost's arguments failed to persuade him. Prost now represented to the government that he was the responsible pastor, and requested that Father Krutil might be dispensed from the oath. The government did not accept this proposal. So Father Krutil left St. Croix and went to St. Thomas, where he did not have to take the oath.

Upon his arrival he found that Father Dold was still suffering from the effects of the yellow fever, that had brought him to death's door on All Saints' Day (26). Father Dold had serious attacks of yellow fever on two occasions. In September 1859 Father Krutil went back to Europe. Towards the end of January 1860 Father Dold was recalled to Europe. He was to travel to Chile in the company of Father Philip Noel, the former provincial of Belgium. The archbishop was delighted to receive them, but the government of Chile would not allow them to reside in the country. So they were forced to retrace their steps. Both visited Father Prost and St. Thomas. Dold continued on his journey to North America, while Father Noel remained in St. Thomas. Towards the end of Father Dold's stay in St. Thomas, the provincial in Baltimore sent the lay-brother, Nicholas Kalmes, as Father Dold was without the assistance of a lay-brother and priest during his serious illness. But on January 27, 1860 Brother Nicholas died, a victim of the yellow fever.

At Christmas the Belgian, Father Louis Buggenoms, with whom Prost had become well acquainted in England, came to replace Father Dold. He had almost been shipwrecked on the voyage from Europe to St. Thomas. For at sea one of the paddle wheels of the steamer broke. Only one wheel was serviceable for the remainder of the journey, and its progress was extremely slow. The people in St. Thomas became very much concerned, when the vessel did not arrive on time. Father Prost was also seriously worried, because he knew that Father Buggenoms was coming on this ship. Father Buggenoms prevented a panic among the passengers by means of prayer,

(26) WUEST, *op. cit.* III 2, 379.

and by urging them to have confidence in God. Upon his arrival in St. Thomas he found a letter from Father Prost, appointing him superior of St. Thomas and granting him all the faculties in the name of the bishop. He also accepted Prost's invitation and went at once to Christiansted, where he celebrated Christmas. He brought Prost a beautiful missal and large pictures of the Stations of the Cross (27). In the person of Father Buggenoms the Belgian province of the institute assumed charge of the parish. Such then was the situation in the year 1860.

Meanwhile during the preceding year 1859 a tragic development had taken place. When Father Ryan, the pastor of Frederiksted, returned from his European trip he brought with him a young priest and namesake of his from Ireland, Father John Ryan. He became the curate in Frederiksted. But after a while the pastor no longer wanted to keep him and sent him to the bishop in Roseau. To reach his destination the young priest first had to go to St. Thomas, but he was obliged to remain there for fourteen days, when the next boat would be leaving for the island of Dominica.

Father Dold took pity on him and invited him to be his guest. He was also known to Prost, for he and the pastor, Father Ryan, had once come to visit him in Christiansted. Father Prost was favorably impressed by the curate, though he appeared to him to be somewhat vain. Father Dold therefore assigned him to Father Prost. The latter felt sympathy for the young priest, and despite the warning of Father Ryan, the pastor, took him in as his assistant. The bishop granted him jurisdiction, and asked Prost to make a good priest out of the Irishman. Since Prost had to leave very shortly for St. Thomas on business connected with the purchasing of the house, he installed Father Ryan as his vicar. He appeared very pious and won the pastor's confidence. The negotiations dragged on. Then complaints came to St. Thomas. Reports also seem to have gone to the bishop, because Prost was ordered by Bishop Poirier to return to St. Croix.

Father Prost received no help from his curate in the pastoral ministry. When he was to preach, his sermons bore no fruit, or he excused himself from this duty on the plea of a headache. On the days appointed for confessions he was frequently indisposed. When he did go to the confessional he heard only the prominent people, and conversed with them at such length, that the whole burden again fell on the pastor. Then at other times he said that he was sick, and that he must go to the country. Time and again he remained for the whole week at the country-estate of some proprietor. The situation became more and more intolerable. But the worst incident of all was yet to happen.

Father Ryan, the pastor, resented it very much, that Father Prost had become the vicar-general, for he had sought this office for many years. Then he seems to have heard that even his parish was to be given to the Redemptorists. Out of this grew a bitter antagonism. Now the two Ryans,

(27) WUEST, *op. cit.* III 430, 432 and 447; BYRNE, *op. cit.* 512.

the pastor and the curate, again became friends. The pastor, Father Ryan, it is true kept prudently in the background, but the sequel was to show that he secretly sowed dissension in the parish of Christiansted.

By inveighing against unlawful marriages Father Prost had made very many enemies amongs the Catholics who came from Europe. The wealthy Irishman and merchant, Roche, was their leader. Various plantation-owners, both English and Irish, as well as some families in the town banded together with him. All these enemies of Father Prost won over the curate to their side. Their aim was to force the resignation of Father Prost, and have him replaced by the young Irish priest. For the latter adopted a very friendly attitude towards them, and they always entertained him when he wanted to go to the country. Thus for more than half a year an underground campaign was being waged against the pastor.

Prost received warning of what was afoot from various quarters. But during his earlier years he had often been too gullible with regard to accusations, had acted without subjecting them to a more careful examination, and thus had been guilty of injustice on many occasions. Therefore from that time on he became more cautious and circumspect when accusations were made. But finally his eyes were opened by many English and Irish plantation-owners, whom he had persuaded to be validly married and to lead a truly Catholic life. Although Prost was directly subject to Father General, he wanted to go to the provincial in the United States, because it was only from there that he could receive new reinforcements. When this became known, the merchant Roche offered him a free passage on his own ship. In this way they hoped, that they would finally succeed in having him removed. But Rome forbade the trip. Thus the enemies of Prost were again disappointed in their hopes. But from now on they worked more persistently than before to bring about his dismissal. They even sought to draw a Catholic landowner and his wife into the conspiracy. The wife protested indignantly against this plan to have the pastor removed. She informed Prost of everything, and he acquainted the bishop with all the facts in the case.

At the same time he tried in a spirit of charity to put an end to the curate's association with the real leaders of the plot to oust him. Prost was convinced that Ryan was only a tool. He explained to the curate, that even if the pastor were forced to leave the island and the parish, yet he would not receive the parish, since he was still a young priest. For the parish in Christiansted, which was the seat of the government, was one of the most important in the whole diocese, and therefore would only be entrusted to an older priest. Then he pointed out to the curate, that his friends would desert him if the plan failed; he as a young priest would then be the only victim. He could also cite the fact that as the pastor he had been helpful to him in every way. He had treated him with consideration at all times; he had granted him one-third of the income. A third (ein gutes Drittel) belonged of right to the pastor, and a third (ein schwaches Drittel) to Brother Henry, who cared for both of them.

But the curate refused to be appeased, and the agitation continued. Prost as vicar-general then served notice on him, that he must report to the bishop. Now the storm broke loose. On a certain Sunday Prost had to travel a long distance in order to administer the last Sacraments. The curate, Father Ryan, presided at Vespers, and his supporters were also present. Everything was carefully planned. After Vespers the curate ascended the pulpit. The people were surprised, since he seldom preached, and believed that he was going to deliver a sermon. But instead Ryan began a tirade against the pastor. At this the vast majority arose and left the church, and he failed in his efforts to persuade the people to remain. At last he was left alone with his small group of followers.

Prost did not arrive home until nine in the evening, and now heard of the incident. He spent the night at prayer in the church. He said Mass at six in the morning in honor of the Mother of God, the omnipotent Virgin. Then he went to the room of the curate, who was still in bed, and informed him that he was forbidden to exercise any priestly ministry in the parish. This penalty of suspension was a severe blow to Ryan. He intended to continue the struggle. Ryan went to an Irishman who had amended his life. The latter had an inkling that the curate was coming, and therefore had previously invited another Irishman, who belonged to the pastor's party, to be present as a witness. They received him in a friendly manner, but when he began to use abusive language about the pastor, they accused him of being unjust, and vigorously defended Father Prost. At this Ryan fell into such a rage, that he struck and even kicked the witness. The man bore everything quietly, for he was reluctant to be drawn into an unseemly brawl with a priest, and left the house. Ryan now realized that he had gone too far, and sought to appease the master of the house. The latter merely pointed out to him, how he had ruined himself by his own conduct.

Prost now went to the governor to inform him of all that had happened. The governor answered that he did not want to become involved in ecclesiastical affairs. Prost explained that he, too, did not want anything of the sort, but he was merely asking him to preserve public peace and order in the parish. The governor agreed to this. Now that Irishman also appeared and gave a report of his own experience. At the same time he also made known, that Ryan threatened to preach against the pastor on the following Sunday. The Irishman had also brought witnesses with him. From their testimony it became clear, that the pastor's opponents had concocted the plot of installing the curate as the pastor of the mission chapel, since they had failed to do so in the parish church. This was the small church on the property of the Englishman's sugar-plantation, to which reference has already been made. The manager was a part of the conspiracy. Prost very often said an early Mass there on the third Sunday of the month, and then another Mass and sermon in the parish church at eleven. He heard confessions there on the Saturday preceding this Mass. The governor immediately sent a commissioner, who sealed up the chapel, and at the same time issued a pro-

clamoration, that it would remain closed until the pastor should open it. Prost kept it closed for many months.

Meanwhile the curate, Father Ryan, was summoned to court. The judge forbade him to enter the church and the presbytery or to cause any disturbance. Furthermore, he required a bail of one thousand dollars. If he did not pay it, he would be kept in jail until a ship should remove him from the island. If he entered the church or the presbytery, or otherwise broke the peace, the bail of one thousand dollars would be forfeited, and the case transferred to the criminal court. As Ryan could not raise the bail, the merchant Roche, who had done the most to egg him on, then offered to pay it. Ryan remained at liberty, but Roche had to keep him quiet, lest he lose his thousand dollars.

Prost reported these incidents to the bishop, and begged him to summon the young priest to himself, to treat him kindly, and by means of a spiritual retreat make him realize the wrong that he had done. The bishop acted on these suggestions. He himself sought to bring about a change in him, and then sent him to the island of Antigua, where there were indeed some Catholics but no priest. When Father Prost was in Europe the bishop sent him further details about Ryan's career. There was a rumor going about, that Ryan wished to marry the daughter of a Protestant bishop; this did not take place, but the bishop had to recall him from Antigua. He came to Trinidad. There he later quarreled with the administrator of the diocese, and became so excited during it, that he struck him and broke two of his teeth. He was now excommunicated. Prost never found out what happened to him after that.

On the Sunday following the trial the judge came in person to the church in order to see to it that order was outwardly observed. Public agitation ceased. Some few of Ryan's followers now went to the church in Frederiksted. On the other hand a message of loyalty, signed by six hundred and thirty-one men, was sent to the pastor. Prost made no mention of what had happened either in the pulpit or in private conversations. Even in his letter of thanks, which he had printed and distributed throughout the parish after receiving this expression of loyalty, he never said a word about these incidents. He merely declared that in the spirit of charity he wished to forget what had happened. The document contained a short treatise on ecclesiastical appointments. He emphasized, that in the Catholic Church the decisive factor is not that the priest is selected by the parish, but that he is appointed or sent by the bishop. Such an explanation was worth while both for the people and the government in the Danish Islands. It was eagerly read by the Protestants and made a good impression. It increased the respect for the pastor.

In the midst of these disturbances Prost received a very advantageous offer. The bishop of Guadeloupe, whom he had learned to know on board ship, wanted the Redemptorists in his diocese. He proposed to give them a house and church, together with an annual income of twelve thousand

francs for six fathers. Two fathers were to be attached to the church, while the others would be free to give missions to the people of the diocese, and throughout the whole of the West Indies. The bishop went on to explain, that he likewise had the yearly sum of fifteen hundred francs at his disposal, and could also use it for the Redemptorists, if it were necessary. Furthermore, he guaranteed a free passage from Europe and back on French vessels of war. Prost forwarded the letter to Rome, and from there he received instructions, that he was to remain in the Danish Islands. In case he were expelled, then Prost could go to Guadeloupe. Prost allowed the news of this offer to circulate among the people, as a way of showing them that his assignment did not depend upon the choice of the parish.

Bishop Poirier had announced that he would make a visitation in the Advent of 1859. Accompanied by a priest he came to St. Thomas before the first Sunday of Advent. Prost had to be on hand to greet him, and as vicar-general to accompany him everywhere, as long as he remained in the Danish Islands. In St. Thomas sermons were preached every day, alternately in English and French. But they did not succeed in settling the schism. The bishop consecrated the church and confirmed.

On the feast of Mary's Immaculate Conception the bishop administered the holy Sacrament of Confirmation in Christiansted, and on the following Sunday in Frederiksted. The bishop stayed with the pastor, while Prost found lodgings in the home of a Protestant, whose wife was a Catholic. Once while dining with the bishop, Father Ryan deliberately violated his rule of formal politeness, and spoke rudely to Father Prost. But Prost blandly ignored his remarks, and thus forced Ryan also to conduct himself again in a more peaceful manner. Prost would have liked to use the time of the visitation for the preaching of missions. But he was only partly successful; for the many celebrations, invitations and visits claimed much of their time. The governor gave a special banquet in honor of the bishop. At Christmas Father Buggenoms arrived. Father Krutil was still with Father Prost. Thus at Christmas Bishop Poirier could celebrate a pontifical Mass at midnight and at eleven in the morning. The governor and his entire staff were present at this second Mass.

The bishop wanted to be in St. Thomas again on St. Sylvester's Day. He remained there for a few days, and then went back to Dominica. Immediately after his return home his priestly companion died as a result of the yellow fever. The bishop's visit cost Prost a large sum of money. First of all, he paid for the vessel from St. Thomas to St. Croix. Then he had to defray all the expenses on St. Croix, and finally he presented the bishop with fifty dollars more for his travelling-expenses. But his parishioners contributed very generously, so that he did not suffer any loss.

After a few weeks Father Krutil had to leave S. Thomas, because he would not take the oath. Thus Father Prost was alone once more. But now the government went even further, and declared that they would not allow a Redemptorist community on the island of St. Croix; the people in

government circles undoubtedly supposed, that other Redemptorists would also refuse to take the oath. Thus the last hopes of Prost for a foundation on St. Croix were destroyed. Nothing was left now except St. Thomas. But there too Prost had his opponents. For it was well known, that he was the driving as well as the sustaining force in the struggle against the schism and the indifferent Catholics.

Furthermore, he also got into an unfortunate quarrel with the provincial in Baltimore. The provincial, Father Ruland, sent books, crosses, pictures and medals to Father Prost. Prost used the books for the lending library. He did not want to give away the articles of devotion, for in the first place his Catholic people were not so poor, and secondly he held to the principle, that one does not esteem a thing that costs nothing. So he placed the articles of devotion in a shop run by three unmarried sisters, who were loyal Catholics. Those who were really poor received the articles of devotion for nothing, and most of the other people gladly paid more than the listed price. The proceeds were spent in procuring things needed in the church.

Then suddenly Prost received an invoice from Father Ruland, which contained an itemized account of the books and articles of devotion, together with the price of each one. He was further required to pay the cost of the journey from Europe to the West Indies; and finally, all the travelling-expenses of Father Dold and the two lay-brothers, as well as those of Father Krutil and Brother Kalmes were charged to him. This exhausted his patience. He wrote a sharp letter to the provincial. He had not sought for the West Indies. He had been sent against his will, and had only gone through obedience. By doing so he had become a stranger in his home-province. He had been obliged to give up many things, in order to carry out the will of his superiors. Instead of finding help he was crushed by a heavy burden of debts. If they had told him to make the return-payment when possible, he would have gladly done so. Instead he was sent a merchant's bill. He had indeed to rue and regret the fact that he had been so obedient. Naturally this letter called forth a strong resentment. Prost sought to prove his readiness to meet his obligations by the fact, that he himself and the fathers celebrated Mass for the provincial's intention whenever they could do so. Prost had written on one occasion to Bavaria about the mission in the West Indies. Thereupon the Bavarian Ludwig-Missionsverein made a donation of four hundred guilders. The fathers of Altötting forwarded the money to the provincial, Father Ruland, who accepted it at once as part-payment.

Even while Prost continued to work quietly in Christiansted, fate overtook some of his opponents. An Irish landowner and his wife, who had been enthusiastic supporters of the curate, Father Ryan, went bankrupt and had to return to Ireland. The daughter of the widow, in whose home the pastor, Father Ryan, lived, became pregnant, had a miscarriage, went insane and died shortly afterwards. On the Saturday evening that Prost re-opened the mission-chapel, Scott, one of those who had opposed him, suffered a

stroke and died on Sunday morning without the last Sacraments. A messenger on horseback brought this sad news to the pastor early in the morning, but it was too late.

Quite unexpectedly, in the summer of 1860, Father Prost received a letter from Rome, which recalled him from the West Indies. Father General left him free to choose between England and Austria. Father Prost answered, that he would come; he was reluctant, however, to select either country, and they might send him wherever they pleased. Thereupon Father Haringer, the General Consultor and Secretary of the General, wrote rather curtly: « We know that you want to go to Austria ». As a matter of fact this decision did not agree with Prost's actual wishes.

During his three years Prost had not only labored zealously in the parochial ministry, but he had also been a good administrator. He had renovated the presbytery, paid off the debts on the church, procured a new organ as well as new vestments; furthermore, he left his successor three hundred dollars for the purchase of new church-benches as well as the beautiful lending library and the horse and carriage. He told the bishop, that the man who followed him, would need to bring only his clothes, for he would find a complete supply of everything else.

An immediate departure was quite impossible. First of all the bishop had to settle the question of the succession and the new appointment to the parish. Rome regarded the suppression of established parishes as a serious matter; under the circumstances, therefore, no one else but a secular priest could be considered as his replacement in Christiansted. Then the so-called hurricane months began. No ship left the harbor during this stormy period unless for some urgent necessity, because the crew and the passengers were exposed to the continual danger of death. The hurricane season commenced on July 25, and therefore a solemn religious service was held on that day, calling upon God for help; and in keeping with this spirit, prayers of thanksgiving were offered on October 25, at the end of the hurricane season.

When Father Prost announced his departure and requested contributions for his journey, the parish showed its heartfelt appreciation for his truly apostolic activity. He was able to procure travelling-clothes, pay for passage, and in addition give two hundred dollars to Father Buggenoms. Then he still had five hundred francs left for the trip, and sixty pounds sterling to reimburse the Austrian provincial.

Prost thus describes his sentiments at that time: « I left the West Indies gladly and reluctantly. I left them reluctantly on account of the poor Negroes to whom I had become attached, but also gladly, for I had not a single happy hour. I saw the people going to eternal ruin, and I could not help. To be able to help I would have had to multiply myself ten-fold. I was continually harassed by the thought, that I was doing too little. I did everything that I considered my duty, but afterwards I was again troubled

by scruples, that I could have done even more, if I had exerted myself more. Because of these anxieties I daily said to the Lord during the holy sacrifice of the Mass, 'Lord, let me die here'. Moreover, I neither said nor wrote a word to be removed, and took no steps in this direction. On the contrary, my words and steps were so directed that I should remain » (28).

Father Prost departed from Christiansted at the end of October. His successor was the Irish priest, Father Lynch. He went first to Father Buggenoms in St. Thomas, whither Brother Henry had already preceded him. He also brought books as well as articles for the house and kitchen, but yet left behind a well-furnished presbytery. He remained a week longer on St. Thomas, and then finally bade farewell to the scene of his labors in Middle America.

When the pastor, Father Ryan, heard of his recall he gave a banquet for his friends. But he only survived Prost's departure by about two months. The sugar-plantation of an Irishman and an opponent of Prost's went into bankruptcy; in order to save his own financial investment, Father Ryan assumed responsibility for the whole plantation. Then he died rather suddenly on November 18, 1860. Father Prost had become acquainted with Ryan's successor, Father John Pfanner, when he was still living in St. Thomas. This priest, a native of Alsace-Lorraine, had accompanied Santa Anna, the exiled ex-president of Mexico, when the latter came to St. Thomas. Father Pfanner had been a pastor in his native land, and had migrated with his parishioners to Texas. Scarcely had they settled down, than they were attacked and driven away by gangs of robbers. He had wandered for three days in the forests until he met a Mexican. He came to the president, who made him the chaplain of his household, and entrusted him with the education of his son, whom he also raised in a thoroughly Christian manner. The son wanted to become a priest. Father Pfanner paid many visits to Father Prost in Christiansted, and they became good friends. But he was not long in charge of the parish in Erederiksted, and died soon afterwards on November 16, 1861.

Father Buggenoms' labors in St. Thomas were singularly blessed by God. He even succeeded in bringing the schism to an end in year 1863. When the bishop came for Visitation, Father Buggenoms asked the governor of the island for permission to select new wardens for the church. Half of the churchwardens were to be named by the bishop, and half by the government. The governor was so accommodating that he nominated the candidates proposed by Father Buggenoms. This destroyed the chief supports of the schism, and the rebuilding of the parish could begin (29). St. Thomas belonged to the Belgian Redemptorists until 1918, when it was transferred to the Baltimore province.

(28) It is also worthy of note that Fr. Buggenoms in a letter to the archivist in Baltimore at the time, says explicitly that Fr. Prost did ask to be changed from the Virgin Islands. Cf. WÜST, *Annales* IV. 379. [*Translators note*].

(29) BYRNE, *op. cit.* 512.

In the year 1890 Bishop Michael Naughten of Roseau requested Propaganda to stabilize the situation of St. Patrick's parish in Frederiksted. On March 20, 1891 the Belgian Redemptorists took over the parish, which passed into the hands of the Baltimore province on February 28, 1918 (30). In 1897 the same bishop asked the Belgian Redemptorists to assume charge of the parish in Christiansted. The first pastor, Father Philip Schelfhaut, succeeded Bishop Naughten in the episcopal see of Roseau in the year 1902. Other small foundations followed in the course of the next few years (31). They form, together with the two parishes of St. Croix, a distinctive American vice-province. In 1924 the former Danish Virgin Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John were made a part of the diocese of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Thus Father Joseph Prost was a real pioneer of the Congregation in the West Indies.

SUPPLEMENTUM

ANDREAS SAMPERS

TABULA DOCUMENTORUM IN AG CONSERVATORUM

Occasione articuli P. is Hosp, qui secutus est tamquam fontem primum si non unicum expositionis suae, ea quae P. Prost narrat in suis Diariis, opportunum ducimus, eo ipso suadente, adiungere indicem documentorum quae de initio et primis annis Missionis CSSR in insulis Antillarum in archivio nostro generali inveniuntur. Pro studio completo et iudicio integro activitatis P. is Prost omnia haec documenta adhibenda essent, sicuti ceteri fontes qui in aliis archivis conservantur.

Allegantur tantum documenta usque ad an. 1860 inclusive (regressus P. is Prost ex insula St. Thomas die 12 X 1860).

Epistulae sunt originales, nisi aliter dicatur.

LITTERARUM COMMERCIIUM RM NICOLAI MAURON

I. CUM S. CONGREGATIONE DE PROP. FIDE (AG Pr. B VPr. Ant II B 1).

1859. - Secretarius S. Congr. Prop. Fide → Mauron, Roma 21 VI (minuta responsi diei 27 VI in AG desideratur).

« Memoria sulle Antille Danesi presentata 14 XII 1859 alla Propaganda » dal Superiore gen. CSSR (*minuta + copia*).

1860. - « Addizioni fatte alla Memoria [del 14 XII 1859] quando fu presentata la 2^a volta, 17 III 1860 » (*minuta*).

Secretarius S. Congr. Prop. Fide → Mauron, Roma 14 XI.

(30) BYRNE, *op. cit.* 524.

(31) *Analecta C.S.S.R.* XV (1936) 111-114.

2. CUM EPISCOPO DE ROSEAU (AG Pr. B VPr.Ant II B. 2).

1857. - Renatus C. Poirier → Mauron (CG Eduardum Douglas ?), Port of Spain 25 IX 1857.
1858. - Michel Vesque, episc. de Roseau → Mauron, Roseau 28 III
Mons. George Talbot → Mauron, Castel Gandolfo 13 V
1859. - R.M. Carolus Poirier, episcopus de Roseau → Mauron, Port of Spain 25 I
Churchwardens of Christiansted → Poirier, Christiansted 28 III
Poirier → Talbot, Roseau 12 IV
Copia Poirier → Card. Barnabó, Praefectum S. Congr. Prop. Fid., Roseau 26 VII
Litterae patentes Episc. Poirier, quibus cura animarum in insulis Daniae subjectis CSSR conceditur, Roseau 27 VII (*copia*).
Poirier → Mauron, Roseau 27 (28?) VII
Copia Poirier → Card. Barnabó, Roseau 28 VII
Minuta Mauron → Poirier, Roma 24 IX
1860. - Poirier → Mauron, Roseau 27 I
Minuta Mauron → Poirier, Roma 17 III
Poirier → Mauron, Roseau 10 VIII
Extractum ex Poirier → Card. Barnabó, Roseau 23 IX
Minuta Mauron → Poirier, Roma 13 XII

3. In epistularum commercio RM Mauron an. 1857-1860 cum Superioribus Provinciae Austriacae (Adam Mangold, Antonius Joehlinger; AG Pr. A I 1-2), Prov. Americanae (Georgius Ruland; AG Pr.Am [Ba] I 1) et Prov. Hollandicae (Ioannes B. Swinkels; AG Pr.H I 1) pluries de Missione hac sermo est, uti patet. Ab enumeratione singularum epistularum abstinemus.

LIBER CONSULTATIONUM GENERALIUM I

tempore RM Mauron, 1855-1862

1856. - Consultatio XXII, 16 VII (p. 25): De acceptanda Missione in Insula S. Thomae in Antillis.
1858. - Consultatio I, 2 I (p. 53): De mittendo P.e Prost in Insulam S. Thomae. - Consultatio XV, 14 IX (p. 60): De avocatione P.is Dold ex Insula S. Thomae.
1859. - Consultatio VII, 4 IV (p. 69): De iuramento a P.e Prost gubernio praestando. - Cons. X, 19 V (p.70): De statu Missionis in Antillis. - Cons. XVI, 19 IX (p. 72): De difficultatibus in Missione Antillarum.
1860. - Consultatio XVI, 14 XII (p. 80): Revocato P.e Prost ex Insula S. Thomae, P. Bossers illuc mittendus videtur.

EPISTULARUM COMMERCIIUM P. IS IOSEPHI PROST

1. PROST → RM MAURON (AG Pr. B VPr. Ant I A 1).

1858. - Roseau 23 II, Christiansted 24 VI, 23 XI.

1860. - Christiansted 19 IV, 6 VI, 18 VI cum PS diei 24 VI, 2 VII, 18 VII.
Minuta RM Mauron → Prost, Roma 19 IX 1858 et alia minuta sine diei indicatione.

2. PROST → CG MICHAELM HARINGER (AG Pr. B VPr. Ant I A 1).

1858. - Christiansted 28 VI, 7 VII

Minuta CG Haringer → Prost, Roma 8 VIII

3. PROST → CG EDUARDUM DOUGLAS (AG XLVII J 1).

1856. - Mautern 6 X, 2 XI

1857. - Mautern 27 I, Katzelsdorf 18 XII.

1858. - Clapham (London) 28 I, Christiansted 7 V, 27 V, 22 VII, 10 IX, 26 IX, 6 X, 8 X, 10 X (inscripta in epistula Vic. gen. Dupart → Prost diei 26 IX), 18 XI cum PS diei 22 XI, S. Thomas 11 XII cum PS diei 13 XII, 14 XII.

Insuper duae epistulae, Christiansted 10 VI et 10 IX, in versione italica manu P. is Douglas exarata; originalia desiderantur in AG.

1859. - Christiansted 27 I, St. Thomas 9 II, 28 II, 3-4-7 III, [Christiansted] initio IV (inscripta in epistula Episc. Poirier → Prost diei 12 IV), 6 VI, 21 VI cum PS diei 27 VI, 6 VII, 21 VII cum PS diei 26 VII, 8 VIII, 23 VIII, 12-16 IX cum PS diei 23 IX, 12 X, fine X, 4-7-11 XI, 24 XI.

1860. - Christiansted 6 I cum PS diei 8 I et diei 11 I, 28 I, 24 II, 22 III, 9 IV, 7 VI, Bishop Eton (Liverpool) 5 XI.

Minuta CG Douglas → Prost, Roma 11 II 1860 et alia minuta sine diei indicatione.

4. EPISTULAE, A P. E. PROST ACCEPTAE, AB EO AD SUPERIORES IN ROMA TRANSMISSAE (AG XLVII J 1).

Orsini, parochus de St. Thomas → Supérieur des Rédemptoristes à Londres, St. Thomas 16 II 1858.

Th. Dupart, vic. gen. de Roseau → Prost, Roseau 6 VIII et 26 IX 1858.

Augustinus [Forcade], episc. de Basse-Terre (Guadeloupe) → Prost, Basse-Terre 23 IX 1858 et 13 III 1859.

Carolus Poirier, episc. de Roseau → Prost, Roseau 25 III, 12 IV et XI 1859, St. Thomas 2 I et Roseau 9 II 1860.

5. COPIAE EPISTULARUM P. IS PROST, QUAS IPSE ROMAM MISIT (AG Pr. B VPr. Ant I A 1).

1858. - Prost → Plur. Rev. P. em Prov. [Americae], Christiansted 18 III.

1859. - Prost → Evêque de Roseau, Christiansted 31 III.
 1860. - Prost → His Excellency the Governor, Christiansted 14 II (Memorandum, 27 × 21, 38 pp.).

EPISTULARUM COMMERCIIUM P. IS FRANCISCI KRUTIL

1859. - Krutil → RM Mauron, West Indies 9 XI (AG Pr.B VPr.Ant I A 4).
 1860. - Krutil → CG Douglas, St Thomas 26 V (AG XLVII J 4).

EPISTULARUM COMMERCIIUM P. IS LUDOVICI DOLD

1856. - Dold → RM Mauron, Rochester 15 X 1856 (AG Pr.B VPr.Ant I A 2).
 1859. - Dold → Très Rév. et très cher Père, St. Thomas 15 VII 1859 (ibid.).
 1860. - Copia Dold → Card. Barnabó, Roma I V (ibid.).
Minuta Dold → Raph. Monaco, Assessorem Congreg. S. Officii, Roma 11 V (ibid.).
 Dold → CG Douglas, St. Thomas 31 I, et Clapham (London) 6 III (AG XLVII J 3).

EPISTULARUM COMMERCIIUM P. IS LUDOVICI DE BUGGENOMS

1. DE BUGGENOMS → RM MAURON.

1859. - Bishop Eton (Liverpool) 11 IX (AG Pr.An I 1 h).
 1860. - St. Thomas 26-31 I, 27 II, 27 IV, 12 X (AG Pr.B VPr.Ant I B).

2. DE BUGGENOMS → CG DOUGLAS (AG XLVII J 2).

1859. - Bishop Eton (Liverpool) 15 X, St. Thomas 31 XII (cum versione italica).
 1860. - St. Thomas 3 I, 14 I cum PS diei 15 I, 26 I, 14 II, 29 II cum PS diei 1 III, 2 III cum notitia P.is Prost, 14 III, 22-30 III, 14 IV, 24 IV, 21 V, 12 VI, 26 VI, 11 VII, 27 VII, 10 VIII, 28 VIII, 21 IX, 26 XI, 12 XII.
 1861-1866. - multae epistulae hic non enumerandae.

Etiam in epistulis P.is ROBERTI COFFIN ad P.em Douglas aliquoties sermo est de Missione hac, e.g. in epistulis diei 3 XI 1856 et 19 III 1858 (AG XLVII B 5).

Exstant DUAE RELATIONES LONGIORES de primis annis huius Missionis ab ipsis Missionariis elaboratae:

« A short history of the beginning of our Mission in the Westindies » auctore P.e PROST, subscriptum: « Christiansted S. Croix, finished the 5 of July 1860 »; 21 × 13.5, 109 pp. (AG Pr.B VPr.Ant I A 1).

« Extrait d'une lettre écrite de Rengo (Chili), le 22 juin 1861, par le R.P. Louis DOLD à Félix Hachez, son concitoyen, qui lui avait demandé une notice sur ses missions d'Amerique », subscriptum : « Pour extrait conforme, le 26 juillet 1864. F. Hachez »; 21 x 13.5, 64 pp. (AG Pr.B VPr.Ant I A 2).

PHOTOCOPIAE DOCUMENTORUM IN ALIIS ARCHIVIS CSSR CONSERVATORUM

1. EX ARCHIVIO PROV. BALTIMORENSIS - BROOKLYN.

1856. - Douglas → Very Rev. Fr. Provincial [Americae], Roma 14 VIII et 16 X.

1858. - Card. Barnabó → Dold, Roma 22 IX 1858.

Insuper habentur photocopiae epistularum RM Mauron ad Superiorem Prov. Americanae. Ab enumeratione singularum epistularum de Missione tractantium abstinemus.

2. EX ARCHIVIO PROV. MONACENSIS - GARS.

1858. - Prost → Plur. Rev. P. Provincialis [Austriae], Roseau 23 II
Prost → P. em Ioannem Madlener, Christiansted 16 III cum PS
diei 29 III.

Minuta petitionis non subscriptae → Hochw. Herr Erzbischof, Alt-ötting 9 VIII.

1860. - *Copia* rescripti « ex Audientia SS. » diei 6 VI pro P. e Dold.