

ANDREW SAMPERS

THE GERMAN PARISH IN SAN FRANCISCO
OFFERED TO THE REDEMPTORISTS, 1885-1886

SUMMARIUM

In archivo generali Congregationis SS.mi Redemptoris multa conservantur documenta ad actiones inter archiepiscopum Patricium Riordan et superiores CSSR circa paroeciam Germanorum civitatis San Francisco, ann. 1885-1886 habitas, spectantia. Datur regestum horum documentorum ordine chronologico, cui praemittimus elenchum alphabeticum eorum qui litteras scripserunt.

The first Redemptorist Missions in California were given in 1885 (1). These Missions were very successful and as a result two foundations were offered by the bishops: the parish of San Gabriel by Bishop Francis Mora of Monterey-Los Angeles and the German parish in San Francisco by Archbishop Patrick Riordan. Neither of the two foundations materialized, mainly because of lack of personnel in the St. Louis Province.

Some 50 documents illustrating negotiations between Archbishop Riordan and the Fathers about the German parish in San Francisco are kept in the General Archives of the Redemptorists in Rome (2). A certain number of scholars have asked to consult these documents and so we think it may be useful to give a complete list, with a summary of each. From this register it will be easy to get a clear idea of the course of the negotiations and some of the reasons why they failed (3).

(1) On the Californian Missions cf. P. GEIERMANN, *Annals of the St. Louis Province of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer* I (1875-1897), Chicago 1924, 169-171, 193-194; T. SKINNER, *The Redemptorists in the West*, St. Louis 1933, 164-167.

(2) The documents are kept in the section *St. Louis Province*, Nr. II 4 a-d *Correspondence between Superior General and Provincial* (1884-1887), and Nr. V 1-23 *Correspondence of several Fathers with Roman Superiors* under H. Giesen (6), L. Koch (12), M. Leimgruber (13), H. Meurer (17), J. Neu (19), G. Smulders (22).

(3) I wish to thank Fr. James Mythen and Mrs. Bronwen Goetze-Claren who have helped me with the make-up of the English text.

List of persons mentioned in the documents (4)

- GIESEN Henry; born Horst (Limburg, Netherlands) 16.9.1826, professed St-Trond (Belgium) 17.7.1848, arrived in U.S.A. 19.3.1851, ordained (by blessed John Nep. Neumann) Philadelphia 26.3.1853, died Chicago 9.12.1893.
- JAECKEL Nicholas; born Utrichshausen (Hessen, Germany) 2.7.1834, professed Annapolis 15.10.1854, ordained Baltimore 2.6.1860, first Provincial of the St. Louis Province 1875-1884, died St. Louis 8.6.1899.
- KOCH (also COOK) Louis; born Philadelphia 23.10.1843, professed Annapolis 15.10.1860, ordained Hechester (Md.) 8.4.1870, died Detroit 16.2.1891.
- LEIMGRUBER Maximus; born Ochsenhausen (Württemberg, Germany) 9.4.1820, professed Bischenberg (Alsatia, France) 16.11.1840, ordained Fribourg (Switzerland) 24.8.1844, arrived in U.S.A. 10.3.1847, died Chicago 18.4.1892.
- LOEWKAMP William; born Huntzburg (Hannover, Germany) 17.10.1837, professed Annapolis 15.10.1856, ordained Annapolis 21.3.1863, second Provincial of the St. Louis Province 1884-1893, died St. Louis 15.7.1899.
- MAURON Nicholas; born St-Silvestre (Ct. Fribourg, Switzerland) 7.1.1818, professed Fribourg 18.10.1837, ordained Fribourg 27.3.1841, Superior General of the Redemptorists from 2.5.1855, died Rome 13.7.1893.
- MEURER Henry; born Montabaur (Hessen-Nassau, Germany) 28.11.1836, professed Annapolis 27.5.1856, ordained Annapolis 21.3.1863, died in the Alexian Hospital at Oshkosh (Wis.) 13.6.1915.
- MORA Francis; born Vich (Catalonia, Spain) 25.11.1827, ordained Santa Barbara (Calif.) 19.3.1856, bishop of Monterey-Los Angeles 1878-1896, died Sarriá (Catalonia, Spain) 3.8.1905.
- NEU John Bapt.; born Feulen (Luxemburg) 12.9.1835, ordained Luxemburg 27.8.1859, professed Trier (Germany) 13.11.1863, in U.S.A. 1876-1895; died Glanerbrug (Overijssel, Netherlands) 29.7.1906.
- RIORDAN Patrick; born Chatham (New Brunswick, Canada) 27.8.1841, ordained Mechlin (Belgium) 10.6.1865, archbishop of San Francisco 1884-1914, died San Francisco 27.12.1914.
- SIMEONI Giovanni; born Paliano (Palestrina, Papal States) 12.7.1816, Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith 1878-1892, died Rome 14.1.1892.

(4) The dates are given in figures in the following order: day-month-year. 2.7.1834 = July 2, 1834.

SMULDERS Giles; born Eindhoven (Noord-Brabant, Netherlands) 1.9.1815, professed St-Trond (Belgium) 8.12.1840, ordained Liège (Belgium) 10.9.1843, arrived in U.S.A. May 1845, died St. Louis 2.4.1900.

ULRICH Michael; Oberbergheim (Alsacia, France) 20.9.1834, professed Teterchen 10.4.1852, ordained Metz 8.8.1858, Consultor General of the Redemptorists 1876-1893, acted often as vicar for the ailing Superior General 1882-1893, died Attert (Luxemburg, Belgium) 2.8.1903.

Register of documents

1884, December 3; Baltimore. Loewekamp to Ulrich. — Original, in German.

California has at last opened its doors to our Missions. The first will begin on January 4 in Los Angeles Cathedral.

1884, December 17; Rome. Ulrich to Loewekamp. — Minute, in German.

Father General in very pleased with the news that Missions will be held in California.

1885, April 8; St. Louis. Loewekamp to Mauron. — Original, in German.

Archbishop Riordan of San Francisco has asked the Redemptorists to make a German foundation. Details will be given soon.

1885, April 16; San Francisco. Riordan to Mauron. — Original, in Italian.

Asks the Redemptorists to take over the pastoral care of the German Catholics in his diocese. Declares himself willing to give them the German parish in San Francisco.

1885, April 16; San Francisco. Riordan to Simeoni. — Copy, in Italian.

Asks him to support his petition addressed to Father Mauron to take over the spiritual care of the German Catholics in the city and diocese of San Francisco.

1885, May 24; St. Louis. Smulders to Mauron. — Original, in French.

The Missions at present being held in California are very successful. Declares himself opposed to taking over the German parish in San Francisco, as the German element is diminishing. Also economically it would be very hard. Moreover, there is a lack of the necessary personnel. Other religious communities, who can do this work, have been established there a long time.

1885, May 25; Los Angeles. Giesen to Ulrich. — Original, in French.

Has been in San Francisco, where the Archbishop is offering the Redemptorists the German parish.

1885, June 21; Rome. Papal rescript. — Copy, in Latin.

Pope Leo XIII approves a Redemptorist foundation in San Francisco.

1885, September 9; St. Louis. Loewekamp to Ulrich. — Original, in German.

Has done nothing so far for the new foundation in San Francisco. Intends to go there in the autumn, or early in 1886.

1885, December 7; New Orleans. Giesen to Ulrich. — Original, in French.

Frs. Loewekamp and Jaeckel are in San Francisco to see about the foundation of a new house there.

1885, December 29; Detroit. Loewekamp to Ulrich. — Original, in German.

Was recently in San Francisco with Fr. Jaeckel, taking note of everything. Will send a report soon about the proposed foundation.

1886, January 18; St. Louis. Loewekamp to Mauron. — Original, in German.

Was in San Francisco at the beginning of December. Acceptance of the pastoral care of the Germans is more complicated than was previously thought. The Provincial Consultors are both against, and will write separately. Enumerates the difficulties: 1 - The (wooden) church (60 x 35 feet) and property (150 x 150 feet) are small; 2 - Many Germans live a long way from this church, which results in a small attendance at the services; 3 - The German element in San Francisco is not increasing but rather diminishing; 4 - The preaching of Missions in the city would stop because priests do not ask resident Religious; 5 - The long journey between San Francisco and the provincial headquarters in St. Louis, nearly 5 days and nights, return-ticket about 160 dollars. Leaves the decision to the Roman authorities.

1886, February 7; Rome. Mauron to Loewekamp. — Minute in German.

As things are at present, the foundation in San Francisco cannot be accepted. Should the Archbishop be willing to offer a place in the city where a monastery can be built, and a church where we can work for both Germans and English, the question can be reconsidered.

1886, February 23; San Francisco. Smulders to Mauron. — Original, in French.

Reaffirms, as Provincial Consultor, his opinion given in his previous letter on the subject (May 24, 1885). The Congregation could do an immense amount of good in California, but a new foundation is impossible because of the lack of personnel.

1886, March 1; St. Louis. Loewekamp to Ulrich. — Original, in German.

Is expecting Archbishop Riordan's answer in about a fortnight. At present eight Fathers are preaching Missions in California with great success.

1886, March 5; St. Louis. Loewekamp to Riordan. — Copy, in English.

« Fr. General finds it next to impossible to give his consent to accept St. Boniface, as it is. The smallness of the grounds and buildings thereon and the little prospects are the main objection ». He is willing to reconsider the proposal, « should Your Grace be in a position, sooner or later, to offer a church and grounds sufficiently large and suitable to build a convent, where we can work for both Germans and English at the same time ».

1886, March 13; San Francisco. Riordan to Loewekamp. — Copy, in English.

Regrets very much « that the General in Rome is not able to accept the German mission of this city. I was of the opinion that the city would offer a splendid field for the zeal of your Fathers ».

1886, March 23; St. Louis. Loewekamp to Mauron. — Original, in German.

Sends copies of his letter to Riordan (March 5) and of Riordan's answer (March 13). Possibly the Archbishop will return to the subject. The Missions in California are a wonderful success.

1886, April 10; Rome. Mauron to Loewekamp. — Minute, in German.

Is very pleased at the success of the Californian Missions. So the desire for a permanent Redemptorist foundation there will remain alive, and the Archbishop will repeat his offer in due time. Asks for a report on the Missions in California.

1886, May 12. Neu to Loewekamp. — Copy, in English.

« The German Congregation in San Francisco is in full blaze

and enthusiasm. If only the Redemptorists were here, we would double and triple the number of comers to church. It is my full conviction, and all our Missionaries here are of the same opinion, that San Francisco and California is the place for Redemptorists. In California, especially in San Francisco, the German Catholics belong to those for whom St. Alphonsus founded the Congregation, the most abandoned people ».

1886, May 16; San Francisco. Riordan to Loewekamp. — Copy, in English.

« I write to ask you to have the question of a foundation of your Fathers in this diocese reconsidered. [...] When you receive a full report from your Fathers now here [preaching Missions], I am inclined to think that your decision will be according to my wishes ».

1886, May 26. Smulders to Loewekamp. — Copy, in English.

Observing the situation here in California, « I have come to the conclusion of reversing my vote in regard to our settling here. [...] The Archbishop is willing to give us any other good place for an English Mission-house or English parish. It is my opinion that we should take the German parish in San Francisco now and agree upon a healthy location out of the city as soon as feasible ».

1886, June 3; San Francisco. Neu to Ulrich. — Original, in French.

A report about the Mission held at St. Boniface's, San Francisco, and in general about the situation of the German Catholics in California. Urges the acceptance of the German parish in San Francisco offered by Archbishop Riordan. In case of a refusal other Religious are ready to take charge of it, and the work of the Redemptorists in California would be finished.

1886, June 8. Smulders to Loewekamp. — Copy, in English.

« The Archbishop is anxious to have us and he will grant us any reasonable request and favour in his power. After all I have seen and closely observed, it is now my decided opinion that we should accept the German Congregation in San Francisco. [...] If we do not accept now, there are others who are anxious to accept, and we will be excluded from this desirable field of Redemptoristic labor ».

1886, June 19; St. Louis. Loewekamp to Mauron. — Original, in German.

Sends a copy of the Archbishop's letter of May 16, and extracts from the letters of Fathers Neu (May 12) and Smulders (May 26 and

June 8). One of the Provincial Consultors (Smulders) is now in favour of accepting the German parish in San Francisco; the other (Jaekel) is still against it. Recommends acceptance for several reasons, provided the Archbishop promises in writing to hand over within 5 years an English parish in or near the city. — With the letter is a plan of St. Boniface's church and grounds.

1886, July 1; San Francisco. Smulders to Ulrich. — Original, in French.

After examining the situation on the spot, has changed his opinion about accepting the German parish in San Francisco. St. Boniface's is to be accepted immediately and three Fathers and two Lay-Brothers are to take up residence there. Then the foundation of a Mission-house is to be arranged.

1886, July 9; Contamine-sur-Arve. Mauron to Ulrich. — Original, in French.

Should the Archbishop accept the condition made by Loewekamp, the foundation in San Francisco can be accepted when the General Consultors agree.

1886, July 13; Rome. Ulrich to Loewekamp. — Minute, in German.

When the Archbishop gives a written promise about an English parish, the negotiations for taking over the German parish in San Francisco can be re-opened. The personnel for the new foundation would have to be selected with care.

1886; July 16; San Francisco. Smulders to Ulrich. — Original, in French.

Recommends the Bishop of Monterey-Los Angeles, Francis Mora, who is going to Europe and wants to speak with the Roman authorities about the establishment of a Redemptorist community in San Gabriel.

1886, July 23; Rome. Ulrich to Smulders. — Minute, in French.

Answer to letter of July 1. Fr. General has authorised Fr. Provincial to re-open negotiations about the German parish in San Francisco. This he may do if the Archbishop promises to give us a foundation for the English Catholics within five years in or near the city.

1886, July 29; St. Louis. Loewekamp to Ulrich. — Original, in German.

Thanks for the approbation of the foundation in San Francisco. Will keep the Roman authorities informed concerning negotiations.

1886, August 6; St. Louis. Loewekamp to Ulrich. — Original, in German.

The Fathers who have been preaching Missions in California returned the previous Tuesday (August 3). All are very pleased with the approbation of the foundation in San Francisco.

1886, August 26; St. Louis. Proposed contract. — Copy, in Latin.

Conditions regulating the status and work of the Redemptorists in the diocese and city of San Francisco. This draft, drawn up by Fr. Loewekamp in six articles, was changed after the meeting of Archbishop and Provincial in Chicago on August 26. A new draft was discussed at the meeting of October 8.

1886, September 2; Lake View. Meurer to Mauron. — Original, in German.

Recommends the work among the German Catholics in California, who are most abandoned. Disposes of the arguments of his opponents (e.g. Fr. Jaeckel).

1886, September 2; Chicago. Leimgruber to Mauron. — Original, in German.

Warmly recommends a foundation in California. All but a few of the Fathers of the Province are very much in favour. — This letter was answered by Fr. Ulrich on September 25.

1886, September 25; Rome. Ulrich to Leimgruber. — Minute, in German.

Answer to letter of September 2. Declares himself very pleased that Fr. General has complied with the renewed request of the Archbishop of San Francisco. The Congregation has great scope for apostolic work in California.

1886, October 15; Covington (Ky.). Neu to Ulrich. — Original, in French.

Had an interview recently with Archbishop Riordan in South Bend (Ind.), who wants to settle the question of the German parish in San Francisco. Though displeased with the attitude of Fr. Provincial in this matter, he still prefers the Redemptorists.

1886, November 2; Rome. Mauron to Loewekamp. — Minute, in German.

Heard nothing about further negotiations concerning the transfer of the German parish in San Francisco. Urges him to continue in spite of the opposition of some of the Fathers.

1886, November 7; New Orleans. Loewekamp to Mauron. — Original, in German.

The reason for the delay over the foundation in California is that the Archbishop objects to transferring the proprietary rights of St. Boniface's parish to the Redemptorists.

1886, November 25; Rome. Mauron to Loewekamp. — Minute, in German.

Hopes that the matter of the foundation in San Francisco will soon be brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

1886, November 26; St. Louis. Loewekamp to Mauron. — Original, in German.

Gives a brief chronological survey of the negotiations in 1886. The Archbishop is still hesitating to approve the transfer of the property of St. Boniface's parish.

1887, January 5; Rome. Mauron to Loewekamp. — Minute, in German.

Thanks for clear report on the negotiations about the foundation in San Francisco. The Archbishop seems to be favourably disposed. We will wait.

1887, January 14; San Francisco. Riordan to Koch. — Original, in English.

« I regret as much as anyone that my negotiations with your Provincial in reference to the foundation in this city were not satisfactory. He asked more than any Bishop could give him, at least at the start. The handing over of a large English parish would give great dissatisfaction to all the priests that no time would heal. [...] So in my inability to receive help from your Provincial I approached the Franciscans, not so much for the city as for a Mission in Lake County, with a prospect for a foundation in the future in the city ».

1887, January 18; New Orleans. Koch to Ulrich. — Original, in English.

Sends Riordan's letter of January 14. The Archbishop cannot sign the contract as drawn up by Fr. Provincial because we ask too much, namely, in addition to the German parish, a large English parish, within 15 miles of San Francisco. « I advised his Grace not to sign for his own sake and for ours. [...] The priests would appeal to Rome against us and the Archbishop. The priests would hate the sight of us ». — This letter was answered on March 1.

1887, January 30; San Francisco. Riordan to Loewekamp. — Copy, in English.

« I informed you that I could not be expected to surrender not only the German parish and its property, but also an English parish and that one of the largest outside of the city. Not hearing from you [...], I had an interview with Rev. F. Bergmayer of the Franciscans of Santa Barbara, looking towards the establishment of these Fathers in San Francisco ». Though he would have preferred the Redemptorists, he gave the German parish to the Franciscans. « I think after all that your work on this coast should be in the establishment of a Mission-house and the giving of Missions. And I hope before long to be able to make you an offer of some place of decent size near the city for this purpose. [...] I am sure that this plan is more congenial to your wishes and to the scope of your Congregation than the former, necessarily now abandoned, of looking after the details of parish work ».

1887, February 3; Kansas City. Loewekamp to Mauron. — Original, in German.

Heard nothing from the Archbishop since he met him on October 8 in Chicago, but it is now evident that the Archbishop has been waiting for a letter from the Provincial. In the meantime Riordan offered the Franciscans a place in Lake County, 30 miles from San Francisco, promising, in the course of time, a foundation in the city. The German parish is still available for the Redemptorists. Expresses the opinion that it should be accepted, as probably within five years a suitable monastery could be built.

1887, February 7; St. Louis. Loewekamp to Mauron. — Original in German.

Sends a copy and translation of Riordan's letter of January 30. The Archbishop has given the German parish of St. Boniface in San Francisco to the Franciscans. We should not regret this. — Included draft of contract between the Archbishop and the Redemptorists, dated 1886, August 26.

1887, February 22; Chicago. Giesen to Ulrich. — Original, in French.

The whole province is disappointed about the breakdown of negotiations over California.

1887, March 1; Rome. Mauron to Loewekamp. — Minute, in German.

With the foundation of a Mission-house which the Archbishop

seems to intend, we would be better off than with the German parish. If such an offer be made, you could accept it forthwith.

1887, March 1; Rome. Ulrich to Koch. — Minute, in English.

« We are all, here, sorry for the unsatisfactory result of the negotiations about the foundation in San Francisco. [...] I am convinced that in future and not far-off years we will find in California something better and a place more advantageously situated for our principal work, the Missions ». If you, as a good friend of the Archbishop, can help to obtain such a foundation, it will be highly appreciated. — This letter was answered on April 15.

1887, March 28; New Orleans. Loewekamp to Mauron. — Original, in English.

Will act according to directives given in your letter of March 1, should the Archbishop offer a foundation.

1887, April 15; New Orleans. Koch to Ulrich. — Original, in English.

Thanks for letter of March 1. « I shall consider it my duty, in compliance with the wish of all our Fathers and especially of Most Rev. Fr. General and his Consultors, to labor for a suitable foundation in California. I feel certain that the Most Rev. Archbishop Rioridan is most anxious to have our community in his diocese. [...] I have sent you with this mail a very interesting book on California » (5).

(5) Probably the following publication, to be found in the library of the General House of the Redemptorists in Rome: *Los Angeles in Südcalifornien. Eine Blume aus dem goldenen Lande*, [von Erzherzog Ludwig Salvator von Habsburg]; 2. verb. Auflage, Würzburg-Wien [1885], XII-240 pp.