

Natchez, June 23rd 1844

5338

To the very Rev. the Superior of the Cong. of the Holy Cross

Very Rev. & dear Sir

Last Summer in Pittsburgh, I said a few words to the Rev. Mr. Carrier of your congregation, about the probability of success if I applied to you to establish a school at Natchez. He told me that this was not in your Province, & I said nothing further. — But indeed the interests of Religion are so much concerned in the question, that I cannot but beg you to assist us. — That seems to me a difficulty which there must be a way to overcome, & perhaps an easy way, if you only understood how much benefit would be rendered to religion by such an institution at this point. — There is not a ^{Catholic} College between New Orleans & Cape Girardeau — & the one at New Orleans has no boarders: — so that there is not a point on or near the Mississippi River, from Cape Girardeau down — where ^{Catholic} parents can send their children to live & receive their education. — I have heard that you have a thought of establishing one at Memphis. — I should be very glad, if that were done, — but that would not make a very material difference. There would still be six hundred miles of the River without a Catholic College — passing through a country from which students have often been sent as far as Baltimore, & Georgetown, for the benefits of Catholic discipline, by Protestant parents. A few years ago, I counted in the catalogue of Nazareth Academy Kentucky, the names of 57 young ladies from Mississippi — & almost all of them Protestants. — Whatever the result of this war may be, Catholic education

will be in greater demand than ever before. - If the Confederacy should establish its independence, Parents will not send their children north, for their education. - If the Federal Government should be restored, the change in the condition of the negroes, & the other changes induced by the war, will increase the white population, & the population of the industrial class, consisting largely of Catholics, ^{profiting by} ~~reaping~~ the advantages of the country, & needing education for their children.

Natchez has after years past been proud of its position in education. - The Institute, or Public Schools has been popular with the poor, & much patronized by the rich. - At present it is closed for want of means. - A good School established here now by you, would at once take possession of the field, & I do not suppose you would easily lose it. - Our greatest want is a good Parochial School: - but if possible we would unite with it an Academy or College to teach the Classics & Mathematics. - We have here the germ of a Boys' Asylum - a legacy with which we purchased a small place of 35 ~~1/2~~ acres on the edge of the town, - & we have still some \$20,000 remaining. It is however in notes, which cannot be paid until after the war. We believe that our debtors are both able & willing to pay - but of course in war times nothing is certain. - The place of the Boys' Asylum is subject to much annoyance just now, from the proximity of the Soldiers, & we are looking for a much larger place - of 500 or 600 acres - a few miles from town.

For our School, we are at present using the basement of the Cathedral: - but we have secured a good lot immediately in front of the Cathedral - 125 ft x 100: - with the privilege, of adding a piece if we desire, which would make it 125 x 139. It is on a corner of the principal Street of the town, Main St. & Union St.

We have now over a hundred boys in our schools. Your coming would at once increase the number to 150 or more: & if you had a good Classical course, I believe you would command the Protestant patronage of the town & neighborhood.

I should be glad to put all the schools of the Assembly under your care, - & if it was desirable, ^{for you} to have a share of the spiritual ministry, I would not object to any arrangement which might serve the interests of religion without injuring them. - The place however is small, but perhaps some division of labor would be useful. -

Be kind enough to write to me as early as convenient, & let me know what to expect. Since I wrote the above, I find in the Almanac of 1860, that of our Province comprises all except Louisiana - As we are not in Louisiana, but in Mississippi - we really fall within your limits. - I beseech you then for the love of the souls redeemed through the Holy Cross - weigh well all that I have written. If you need more information, I will try to satisfy you. - Now is exactly the time to do this work, before others take possession of it.

With all respect - Begging your remembrance in the Holy Sacrifice -
I remain

Very Rev. Sir,

Your humble servt. in Christ
+ William Henry Elder
Bishop of Natchez