



Barquilla de la Santa Maria

BULLETIN of the Catholic Record Society -
Diocese of Columbus

Vol. XXVIII, No. 7

July, A.D. 2003

Bishop James Whelan, O.P.:

College President in Somerset and Second Bishop of Nashville, While Passing Through and Returning to Zanesville

by Anthony J. Lisska, Denison University
(Continued, from Vol. XXVIII, No. 6)

Second Bishop of Nashville

O'Daniel suggests that there is evidence that Whelan's name had gone earlier to Rome as possible Bishop material, but nothing had happened. Stritch writes that "no doubt his preaching made him well known, for he was named a likely future bishop all through the 1850's."⁹ O'Daniel also notes that Bishop Miles, in naming three possible successors in the *rota* he sent to Rome, had Whelan listed number three in ranked order. Whether Miles had reservations about Whelan or simply did not wish to have him removed from his duties as an influential member of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph is unknown. It is, however, known that Archbishop Purcell highly respected and admired the young Dominican, who at that time had acquired significant administrative experience as Regent of Studies, College Professor, College President, and Prior-Provincial of a major religious order in the United States. O'Daniel suggests that the authorities in Rome took seriously Purcell's preference of Whelan for the bishopric of Nashville and acted accordingly.

Hence, the ecclesiastical career of James Whelan continued its quick running start. In a document dated January 28, 1859, Whelan was appointed

titular bishop of Marcopolis and coadjutor to Nashville. On May 8, 1859, Archbishop Peter Kenrick, who as Archbishop of St. Louis was the Metropolitan Bishop with jurisdiction over Nashville, consecrated him in the old cathedral of St. Louis. Bishop Miles appears to have been too infirm to attend the consecration in St. Louis.



Bishop Richard P. Miles (1791-1860)

Whelan journeyed immediately to his new see city. Miles, ill as he was, lacked the energy immediately to install Whelan as his successor. Three weeks later, on May 29, 1859, Bishop Miles introduced his and their coadjutor to the Tennessee Catholics in Nashville. Stritch writes the following rather touching scene describing the installation ceremony:

In tremulous tones Bishop Miles introduced to the cathedral audience his coadjutor, to whom, he said: "I cheerfully surrender the labors, cares, responsibilities of the episcopacy. I give up to him all but my title and my chair, which I am not at liberty to relinquish while I live."¹⁰

The freshly installed bishop responded to his predecessor with remarks, so the contemporary accounts report, with grace and charm. His effectiveness as a preacher and orator were demonstrated to the new members of his diocese, both clerical and lay, with alacrity and verve. That such a positive response to the new bishop was to be short-lived is one of the tragedies of Whelan's time in Nashville. Bishop Miles's health continued to decline rapidly, and he died early the next year on February 21, 1860. Following Miles's death, Whelan assumed the bishopric of Nashville. In his nineteenth century account of American Catholicism, John Gilmary Shea wrote about Whelan's appointment to the see of Nashville in a glowing manner: "Learned, eloquent, and laborious, he was well fitted for the position to which the voice of the successor of St. Peter called him."¹¹

At this time, Rev. Langdon Thomas Grace, then the Dominican pastor of St. Peter's Church in Memphis, was named the second bishop of St. Paul, Minnesota. The struggling Province of St. Joseph within a matter of months had lost two stalwart members to the American hierarchy. The Provincial, Rev. Joseph Kelly, remarked in his chatty diary that "the taking of FF. Whelan

and Grace leaves us in a very crippled condition."¹²

Early Days in Nashville

Bishop Whelan appears to have undertaken his new duties with his customary energy and zeal. Always interested in education and in developing suitable religious life patterns for religious women, in August 1860 Whelan arranged for four Dominican Sisters from Somerset to journey to Nashville. Whelan purchased Mount Vernon Garden, a beautiful mansion with six acres of ground about a mile north of the state capital, to be the home of the new academy for the education of women. Once in Nashville, these four Sisters established St. Cecilia's Academy, whose mission was to provide for the higher education of young women in the Diocese of Nashville. Classes opened in October 1860 and the first group of young women graduated in June 1862. Because of its emphasis on music and the fine arts, the school and the Dominican religious congregation itself were named in honor of St. Cecilia, who was the patroness of music.¹³ Within a short time, however, these sisters found themselves on Civil War battlefronts serving the wounded and dying as nurses. Early in his stay in Nashville, Whelan also established a school for boys under the care of two teaching brothers.

Problems of some sort or other relating directly to the new bishop, however, appear to have arisen in Nashville rather soon. A bit more than two years after Miles's death, Whelan's provincial bishop, Archbishop Kenrick, wrote to the Propaganda offices in Rome about Whelan's "discreditable conduct" in office.¹⁴ Stritch also reports that other area bishops were writing to Rome about this time supporting the general thread of allegations brought forward by Kenrick. This state of affairs boiled over in the spring of 1862, and it appears that by then Whelan's days as a sitting bishop were numbered.

Whelan wrote to Kenrick, the metropolitan archbishop who had oversight for the Diocese of Nashville, that he had submitted his resignation to Rome on August 15, 1862. On this same day, he wrote to his friend, Bishop Spalding in Louisville:

I beg leave to state that I have written to the Most Rev. Archbishop of St. Louis informing him that I have complied with the purport of the communications I received from you a few days ago.... Nothing on my part shall be done to embarrass still more the unfortunate state of affairs. I must confess, however, that the present condition of home affairs, business and monetary matters; owing to the Political State of the country will necessarily cause me perplexity and unhappiness...will do all that I possibly can so that everything may be done as it should be and credit of the diocese not be impaired.¹³

The historical sources suggest a reconstructed series of events something like the following: Archbishop Kenrick, along with some fellow bishops, write to Rome about Whelan's problem. Nicholas Dominic Young learns of this event and tries to forestall serious ramifications. Kenrick appears to have requested Whelan's resignation. Whelan submits his resignation to Rome in August 1862. It takes Rome nearly a year to respond to Whelan's letter or resignation, but it is accepted. There is some evidence that Whelan too may have received a directive from Rome that he was to resign from his office of Bishop of Nashville. Whelan leaves the Bishop's residence in Nashville in July 1863, but he does not return to Ohio until the spring of 1866. The narrative filling out this schema will be developed in the following pages.

Archbishop Kenrick wrote Purcell on June 30, 1863. This letter informed Purcell that "Bishop James Whelan of Nashville has resigned, and that Father Joseph A. Kelly, O.P., has been appointed by Kenrick in virtue of special faculties from Rome, as administrator of that diocese."¹⁶ A letter from Father William McCloskey, dated

August 6, 1863, to Archbishop Purcell notes that "the Holy Father has accepted the resignation of the Bishop of Nashville [and that] directions have been sent to St. Louis to look after the diocese."¹⁷ In addition, the documents from the Pope authorized Archbishop Kenrick to appoint an administrator of the Diocese of Nashville until another bishop could be appointed to succeed Whelan. A fellow Dominican from the Province of St. Joseph who had been stationed at the Church of St. Peter in Memphis, Father Kelly, was the new administrator of the diocese. In August 1863, Kelly announced to his Memphis congregation that the Bishop of Nashville had resigned and that Rome had accepted the resignation. Kelly also informed his congregation that he had been appointed administrator of the diocese and that he would be leaving for Nashville very soon and would remain there until a new bishop was appointed. Little did Kelly know that his Nashville stay would be for over two years!

In an almost desperate attempt to cut his losses, as it were, Whelan wrote an extended document describing his efforts on behalf of his diocese. This document, dated June 30, 1863, is entitled: "Report of the Diocese of Nashville by the Rt. Rev. James Whelan, O.P., D. D., Second Bishop of Nashville." As Stritch notes, it is unclear to whom this document was addressed. It does appear to be an "apologia" for his time in office as the successor of Bishop Miles. But by this time, Whelan had already submitted his resignation of his bishopric to Rome and it had been accepted.

Why the Forced Resignation?

What is one to make of this? Several events appear to fold together in a set of circumstances such that Whelan's days in office were numbered.

First of all, the advent of the War of Rebellion came during Whelan's second year in office. Whelan was apparently, like his good friend,

Archbishop Purcell of Cincinnati, strongly pro-Union in sympathy and commitment. Tennessee was pro-Confederacy as a state, and while Nashville had its own pro-Union citizens, nonetheless it was considered a southern city. Whelan's own dispositions on the War Between the States seem to have electrified the minds of his flock through his friendship, from earlier days in Ohio, with General William Starke Rosecrans. Rosecrans grew up in the small Licking County village of Homer and following his graduation from West Point, spent a decade in Cincinnati and in what was to become West Virginia. Whelan probably knew Rosecrans from his Cincinnati days, since he and Purcell, good friends that they were, knew the younger Sylvester Rosecrans, the then Auxiliary Bishop of Cincinnati.

Reading the surviving texts about Whelan's life along with the scattered biographical accounts leads one to surmise that Whelan may have suffered from a form of what the next century would call depression. Whelan's early life as a Dominican student indicated that he was not always energetic with his studies and other duties. This possible proneness towards depression may have led Whelan into the state suffered by many in the middle parts of the last century, some form of alcoholism. The evidence about this state is scattered, but there are enough remaining letters to suggest that this activity contributed significantly to Whelan's demanded resignation. The Dominican historian, Victor O'Daniel, steadfastly denies Whelan's insobriety with the exception of one case where Whelan apparently used hard liquor for medicinal purposes.

Both of these sets of issues require analysis and discussion. Dealing with the suspicion of depression and its contribution to alcoholism, Stritch quotes extensively from a telling letter from Whelan's fellow Dominican, Januarius D'Arco, who both lived in the Bishop's residence

and appears to have served as the Chancellor of the Diocese of Nashville. Writing to Bishop Lefevere of Detroit, D'Arco describes Whelan in the following acutely descriptive account:

It seems that he [Whelan] was never satisfied to stay here, though he has done a great deal of good since he came here, he was never fit for this place, as intelligent as he is, he had very little to occupy his intellect. No business here, a priest is enough here; hence the blunder, and knowing the consequences his mind occasionally was troubled and he gave way to d.... Those to whom he offered the hospitality of his table, have been partially to cause of his downfall.... He is young, and I hope this will be a good lesson for him for the future...¹⁸

As Stritch notes in opposition to O'Daniel's denial, the principal allegation of the bishops against Whelan, which was insobriety, was at least occasionally true. One suspects that the stress of being in charge of a devastated diocese in the first year of the Civil War contributed immensely to Whelan's sense of isolation and depression. This certainly produced a situation where those prone to overusing alcohol often succumb to its temptation. Letters in the Archives of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame contain rather unambiguous references to Whelan's battle with alcohol. On February 5, 1862, Whelan writes to Purcell explaining what appears to be his alcohol problem. His letter has been abstracted as follows:

Whelan is pained to write on the subject. He admits using some stimulant because of the coldness during his trip to Louisville, as he has on other occasions. He denies that he has any propensity of this kind. He does not wish to excuse his folly but asks that the matter be dropped or left before the throne of God. He solemnly promises not to use such stimulants again unless under physicians orders. If Purcell writes he is to address the letter in care of Bishop Martin J. Spalding [in Louisville].

This letter unequivocally indicates that on

occasion Whelan did use, and moreover probably abused, alcohol. The venerable Dominican pioneer priest, Nicholas Dominic Young, writing to Purcell on the same day, writes the following (in abstract):

Young has received Purcell's letter with its sad information. He has reason to fear that it is true. The scandals in Memphis he had heard from Father James Clarkson and at the suggestion of Bishop Spalding, he wrote to Bishop Whelan. The admonition was never noticed. He has feared a repetition. They heard that Whelan had left Louisville but was not coming to their convent [i.e., a reference probably to the Priory of St. Rose in Springfield, Kentucky, about forty miles south of Louisville]. If Spalding has heard from Purcell, Young hopes that he persuaded Whelan to come to them where he can save himself from degradation of character by retirement with or among the community of St. Rose.¹⁹

Five days later, writing again to Purcell, Young discusses the drinking problem exhibited by Whelan. This letter dated February 10, 1862, not only notes the alcohol problem but indicates clearly that there is a move afoot to remove Whelan from office.

Since writing to Purcell, Young has received a consoling letter from Bishop Whelan from which he quotes some words in which Whelan acknowledges Young's interest and announces that he has made a vow against the evil. Whelan feels that he can keep the vow. Young has no doubts that "Whelan will fulfill these promises and become a worthy bishop." Father Joseph A. Kelly, O.P., the Dominican Provincial at St. Rose, has learned from Father John Lynch, O.P., that Bishop George Carrell and other bishops have petitioned Rome for an administrator for the diocese. Young pleads with Purcell for a reconsideration of the case. If the matter is stopped now, the scandal will be forgotten, but if he is suspended the scandal will spread. Young feels for him, as he has great talent. Young has not heard from Father Francis Cubero [who was in Nashville at this time] and he hopes he is doing well.²⁰

Purcell writes to Kenrick "in order to correct an impression expressed in Kenrick's letter." Writing in Latin, Purcell states that "the scandal did not happen 'in my house' but in a public tavern where it was seen."²¹

The historical evidence of an alcohol problem is rather substantial however one reads the various remaining letters. There was, it appears, an instance or instances of public intoxication in a tavern in Memphis, another in Cincinnati, together with the "use of stimulants" while on horseback returning from Kentucky. One suspects that these were not isolated cases. To call for the suspension and/or resignation of a sitting bishop is not a trivial undertaking, and Rome would act on such a question only with substantial evidence and a pressing set of circumstances.

The author of the chapter in the recently published Dominican history dealing with the Whelan case, Sr. Loretta Petit, notes the recent material from historical collections in Rome.

Only in the correspondence between the archbishop [Kenrick] and the Propaganda Fide in Rome did Peter Kenrick state that the scandal was "excessive drinking in Nashville and in Cincinnati. Concerning the truth of this matter, there is no place for uncertainty, since he himself confessed to me through letters, and from face to face...."²²

Sr. Loretta remarks that "Whelan felt keenly his deposition, as is shown in his remark to Kenrick, 'I submit to the severe but I presume just and necessary chastisement....'"

(To be concluded)

NOTES

9) Stritch, p. 143.

10) *Ibid.*

11) John Gilmary Shea, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States: Volume IV: From the First Provincial Council of Baltimore,*

1843, to the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, 1866 (New York, 1892), p. 636.
 12) From the Diary of Joseph Kelly, found in Mary Nona McGreal, O.P., editor, *Dominicans at Home in a Young Nation: 1786-1865*, Volume 1 of *The Order of Preachers in the United States: A Family History* (Strasbourg, 2001), p. 185.
 13) It is of interest to note that the Dominican sisters of Nashville have come full circle. Members of their congregation presently staff the elementary school of St. Gertrude's, a Dominican parish in suburban Cincinnati.
 14) Stritch, p. 144.
 15) Letter from the Diocese of Louisville

Archives, found in McGreal, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
 16) University of Notre Dame Archives, file on 1863. The archival accounts from the Notre Dame Archives published with this essay are the descriptive narratives of the actual letters themselves. This accounts for the narrative rather than the personal style.
 17) University of Notre Dame Archives, file on 1863.
 18) Stritch, p. 144 [The text is unedited.]
 19) University of Notre Dame Archives, file on 1862.
 20) *Ibid.*
 21) *Ibid.*
 22) McGreal, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Columbus Cathedral Section C, Lot Records, 1867-1926

(Continued, from Vol. XXVIII, No. 6)

108-C north
 p. 98, Patrick Hines, 1878 Jan. 24, lot 108 north half. Graves: 1878 Jan. 24; 1879 Feb. 24 child; 1881 Aug. 30 child; 1891 Oct. 5 child.
 + Patrick Hines died Jan. 23, 1878, aged 55 years

108-C south
 p. 91, John Scanlan, "all dead", 1877 June 23, lot 108 south half. Graves: 1877 June 23; 1882 Oct. 10; 1888 May 22; 1883 Oct. 9; 1899[?] May 4.
 Mary Agnes Scanlan Brady May 3, 1865 - May 18, 1888
 {[Scanlan] children: John Thomas died Nov. 4, 1855 aged 10 y 2 m 26 d An infant died Aug. 8, 1858 William Joseph died Mar. 23, 1877 aged 23 y 3 m 23 d Michael John died Sept. 30, 1883 aged 24 y 1 m 23 d}
 John G. Scanlan died Feb. 20, 1883 aged 71y 18d
 Mary Naughton his wife died Oct. 11, 1882 aged 60 y 8 m 11 d

109-C
 p. 145, Constant Isabell, Grogan, Ohio, 1876 Feb. 1, lot 109. Graves: 1898 May 7 child;

1901 Feb. 2; 1902 July 17 child; 1903 Feb. 20 child; 1908 Nov. 8; 1910 Feb. 19; 1911 Jan. 7; [blank] March 8; 1912 Aug. 3; 1929 June 16.
 Clara Isabel 1883-1912
 Agnes Morschauer 1870-1911
 Wilmer E. Isabel 1900-1975
 Frank X. Isabel 1876-1968
 Margaret Baron 1816-1901
 Gertrude Isabel 1877-1911
 Alphonsine Isabel 1842-1929
 Constant Isabel 1840-1896
 Mary daughter of C. & A. Isabel, born Feb. 4, 1872, died Feb. 2, 1876

110-C
 p. 159, Mrs. Mary Millay, 1874 [blank], lot 110. Graves: 1877; 1889 Mar. 3; 1908 Apr. 20; 1919 July 3; 1919 Dec. 11; 1925 Dec. 19.
 Isabel T. Millay died July 2, 1919, aged 79 yrs
 Mary L. Millay died Dec. 12, 1919 aged 68 yrs
 Helen Millay died Dec. 18, 1925 aged 81 yrs
 William Millay native of Co. Kilkenny, Ireland, died Jan. 9, 1872 aged 72[?] ys
 Mary wife of William Millay died Apr. 10, 1894 aged 78 yrs

(Husband) William Millay Jan. 23, 1870 - Apr. 19, 1908

111-C

p. 150, Ann Pickens, 279 W. Spring, 1874 July 29, lot 111. Graves: 1876 Apr. 5; 1879 Aug. 16 grave for Monahan; 1888 Apr. 11; 1891 March 10; 1898 Oct. 24; ---- Jan. 10; 1910 March 16.

Baby Dan Gabel 1913

Honoria S. Gabel June 23, 1908 - July 31, 1922

My Baby Girl

John A. Gabel, M.D. 1912-1973

112-C west

p. 150, ~~William-Quinn Hannah-Quinn~~ Anna Quinn, 1874 July 29, lot 112. Grave: 1903 July 15.

Anna T. Quinn 1863 + 1956

112-C east

p. 489, Miss May Startzman, 44 Center St., 1910 Aug. 2, lot 112 east half. Graves: 1910 Aug. 2; 1916 Feb. 14; [1916?] June 3; 1925 Oct. 5.

(Cousin) Annie Cassidy Lincoln Died May 31, 1916

(Uncle) + Owen Quinn, July 27, 1929, aged 67 y

(Daughter) Anna Mary Startzman 1876 + 1957

(Father) Peter P. Startzman 1854 + 1925

(Mother) Margaret Startzman 1856 + 1916

(Sister) Katherine Startzman 1877 + 1910

113-C

p. 145, Edward Hughes, 1871 June 27, lot 113. Graves: 1899 Sept. 11 for M. J. Bergin, child; 1900 Apr. 1; 1901 May 14; 1902 March 7; 1907 Feb. 9; 1908 Oct. 25; 1911 Apr. 30.

At Rest - John J. Hughes 1859 + 1918

(Father) Edward Hughes died Mar. 31, 1900, aged 73 years. May his soul rest in peace.

+ Catherine Hughes born August 1833, died, May 13, 1853 aged 20 years

114-C

p. 146, John Ryan, 1875 Aug. 14, lot 114.

Graves: 1882 June 17; 1900 May 14; 1908 Jan. 7.

+ John Ryan of Co. Waterford, parish of

Recormick, Ireland, died June 16, 1882

Catharine A. Daughter of John & Mary Ryan died

Jan. 31, 1865 aged 3 ys & 10 mo.

115-C

p. 160, Michael Haviland, 1871 Feb. 19, lot 115. Graves: 1878 June 17 child; 1888 Feb. 15 child; 1902 Dec. 31; 1904 Feb. 29; 1907 Aug. 22; 1911 Mar. 20; 1916? Nov. 22.

+ HAVILAND

Michael 1895

Mary 1911

Harry 1901

John 1902

Elizabeth Hartley 1957

Anna Haviland 1915

Edward 1878

Margaret 1952

Mary C. 1951

Grace O'Connor 1942

Rosemary Hartley 1916

Marguerite Hartley 1894

116-C

p. 146, Edward Ryan, 1871 March 11, lot 116. Graves: 1880 Nov. 5; 1886 Aug. 22 child; 1901 Feb. 18 child; 1890 Sept. 6; 1908 Sept. 26; 1911 Aug. 25; 1922 July 1; 1929 Nov. 8.

+ Edward Ryan, a native of Ireland Co. of Waterford Parish of Rathgormic Died Mar. 10, 1871 aged 71 yrs. May his soul rest in peace.

(Mother) Sarah Phelan Nov. 15, 1861 - July 1, 1922

117-C east

p. 246, Michael Brennan, lot 117 C; sold, see p. 410.

Michael Brennan: died Jan. 10, 1871, aged 25 y'rs. A native of Ireland, from Kilkenny near M—town

118-C west

p. 87, John Monahan, 284 Neil St., 1871 May

13, lot 118 west half. Graves: 1893 Dec. 16;
1901 Feb. 9; 1911 Feb. 25; 1923 May 2.
p. 410, John Monahan, ~~280-East-Naughten-St.~~
280 Neil St., 1899 July 15, lot 117 west half.
Graves: 1899 July 15 child; 1900 July 20 child;
1911 Dec. 8.

John Monahan

Ellen his wife

Katherine Monahan

Myrtle Walbern 1891-1917

(Mother) Mary J., wife of James R. Glass 1865 +
1917

118-C east

p. 189, Patrick Walsh, 1881 Jan. 17, lot 118
east half. Graves: 1881 Jan. 17; [no year] Oct.
17; 1899 Sept. 18; 1906 May 23; 1908 Dec.
[no day].

Thomas Kennedy died Dec. 14, 1909

His sister Catharine Kennedy died Oct. 16, 1894

119, 120, and 121-C

p. 158, John C. English, 1871 May 3, lots 119,
120, and 121. Graves: 1881 July 19; 1893
March 15; 1915 Sept. 4.

Mary A. English 1863-1921

Louise R. English 1866-1952

Mary R. wife of John C. English 1844-1915

John C. English 1830-1881

John R. English 1861-1893

Theron B. Miller 1870-1946

Jessica E. Miller 1871-1964

Florence R. English 1871-1871

(To be continued)

John C. English

All who knew Mr. English noticed that his health had
been steadily declining...and on Tuesday morning...the
flame of life...quietly died out, and he, in peace and
fortified with all the rites of the Church, yielded his soul to
its Creator.

Mr. English was a native of Ireland, being born in the
County Limerick about the year 1828. Whilst yet a mere
boy, he came to America and entered St. Joseph's College,
Somerset, this State, conducted by the Dominican
Fathers. After leaving college, he obtained a situation as
clerk in a clothing house at Zanesville, and after some
years, by industry and economy, he saved up means
enough to start a clothing establishment of his own. He
had at different times associated with him several
partners and did a thriving business for several years in
Zanesville. Mr. P. C. Ryan of that city was for a long time
thus associated with Mr. English. In 1868 the deceased
moved to Columbus and engaged in the wholesale
clothing business, under the firm name of English, Miller
& Co., but for the past two years Mr. English had been
alone in the business...

He leaves a most estimable and loving wife, a son, just
reaching manhood, and recovering from a protracted
illness, and five daughters... A brother of Mr. English's,
living in Pallas Green, County Cavan, Ireland, is the only
other near relative. Mrs. English is a daughter of Hiram
H. Robinson, of Cincinnati, formerly editor of the
Cincinnati Enquirer and later State Librarian under
Governor Bishop.

In business Mr. English was exact, and to those
unacquainted with his ways he would appear harsh, but,
perhaps, no better-hearted man lives in Columbus to-day
than he was on all occasions. His charity has been
concealed... At the time of his death he was a member of
the Board of Trustees of the Ohio Institution for the Blind.

The funeral took place Thursday morning last, at St.
Joseph Cathedral... The Rt. Rev. Bishop preached the
sermon and gave the last absolution.

- *Catholic Columbian*, July 23, 1881