

Chapter Eleven

GROPINGS FOR MINISTRIES, 1921-1926

When the New England regio was constituted in 1921, there were three educational institutions in its territory: Holy Cross in Worcester, Boston College in Chestnut Hill and Boston College High School in the South End of Boston. It had three parishes: the Immaculate Conception in the South End, Saint Mary's in the North End and Holy Trinity, a German national church, on Shawmut Avenue. There was a villa at Keyser Island in South Norwalk, Connecticut, owned by a group of houses in the united province. It had no houses of formation, and when the era of the regio closed, the schools and the parishes were the same. Special arrangements had still to be made about Keyser. But a noviceship-juniorate had been established in 1923 at Shadowbrook, really in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, but ultimately with a postal address in Lenox, to whose center it had closer proximity. Fairview, the house of philosophy, had been opened at Weston, Massachusetts in early January of 1922, although a few residents arrived very late in 1921. What other projects besides scholastic purchases, refurbishing and added construction had been sought out or attempted to increase ministries, must now be considered.

One of the first considerations at province consultors' meetings was the possibility of a second high school in the Boston or greater Boston area to relieve the pressure of numbers on Boston College High School, and to keep both the old and the possible new school of moderate size. Cardinal O'Connell indicated that he favored a second Jesuit high school. Fr. Joseph J. Hanselman, the American Assistant at the General's Curia, opposed the idea. Do well or better with the school you have, was his view. The idea of a second Jesuit high school, in or near Boston, originally warmly received, seems to have petered out. Another early educational possibility was the proposal made by Fr. William (Pa) Walsh to accept property in Burlington, Vermont for a school. It was considered an unsatisfactory proposal since the location was so close to St. Michael's in Winooski, Vermont, run by the Fathers of Saint Edmund.

Boston College showed some change during the vice-provincial period. Its graduate department, which had been begun in 1912 by Fr. Matthew Fortier and closed as a World War I casualty, was re-instituted under Fr. James F. Mellyn. It is a bit difficult to associate Fr. Mellyn with Boston College in educational instruction and administration from 1916 to 1926, because of his extended and distinguished career at the High School and the Immaculate. There he was treasurer, preacher and the moderator who brought the Catholic Alumni Sodality to pre-eminence. At the May, 1923 consultors meeting, Fr. Mellyn proposed to inaugurate that fall a bachelor of education program for

present or potential teachers. Courses would be held at Boston College High School afternoons and evenings and on Saturday mornings. Seemingly three full-time Jesuits would be needed, but it was possible that staff members of Boston College would pitch in and supply the teachers. It was assumed as a strong point that the program would pay for itself. Although Fr. Mellyn was invited to the consultants meeting to explain the project, the decision was postponed for more study. Such a school did open in 1924 and became the main nucleus of what was long termed the Extension School. This so-called extension school included in addition to its under-graduate work the original and more developed graduate division at the master's and ultimately the doctoral level. There was at times an ill-considered mix of courses open rather indiscriminately both to lower division college students and also to graduate students. This mix caused later trouble in 1934.

At the same time when Fr. Mellyn requested permission for the undergraduate program to be extended over a series of years, a request came from Cardinal O'Connell through Msgr. Augustine Hickey, the diocesan superintendant of schools. This request asked that a summer school might be opened by Boston College in 1923 for sisters. Enough students were being guaranteed, but the project was received coolly by the consultants. If it were to be done, it would be done only because Cardinal O'Connell wanted it. But it seemed an infringement on the leisure of the fathers at Boston College if they were held to teaching a variety of courses for five or six weeks during the summer. It did not seem of any significance that Fordham for some years had operated a summer session as a normal project. In the consultants' eyes, the summer was a time for one's own retreat, for the possible giving of one or two retreats and having adequate rest. However by the summer of 1924 the Summer Session began and was soon open to others than sisters. It became an influential factor vis-a-vis religious groups, public school teachers and even college failures who profited from a Jesuit approach to a subject. With time it could become with a simple administrative set-up a considerable source of revenue. This extra money could assist schools with high-level value objectives, but with a low profile in revenue.

A proposal of Fr. William A. Devlin, the rector of Boston College, was perhaps more pragmatic than that of Fr. Mellyn. In May 1922, Fr. Devlin proposed to the province consultants that they approve the beginning of a business college at the Chestnut Hill campus. The project would require the services of three Jesuits: a dean, an ethics professor, and a teacher of apologetics. The remaining staff would be lay associates. Initial costs were placed at \$30,000. The reception from the consultants was cool. There was no such money to spare. Neither were three Jesuits available for the work. In the last place, there was adequate collegiate work already at hand for the numbers of Jesuits available. Apparently before he left office in August 1925, Fr. Devlin once again broached some plan for a business college. At the November 15, 1925 consultants meeting

it was indicated that Fr. General wanted more information on the proposal. Whatever action was taken to satisfy Fr. General, no more is heard of it. When such a school did come to fruition at Boston College in 1938, its original curriculum followed a liberal arts approach with many humanistic, philosophical and religious courses with business concentration chiefly at the upper-division level. Thus it was not, as Fr. Devlin termed it, a business college, but as it came from the hands of Fr. McGarry, Fr. Maxwell and Fr. James Kelley, a college of business administration. Now it has a more plebian name.

An odd quirk confronts us concerning Holy Cross. In the closing days of the vice-province there had been discussion of the purchase at Stoney Point in Newport, Rhode Island of an estate for a villa. It appears to have been intended for Weston, whose philosopher's villa at Keyser Island had been forced to use the often chilly and rainy days of rather early June to accommodate the needs of regents in July. With the possible arrival of theologians at Weston, there could be more need for villa space. But the cost for the necessary upkeep of this Newport property seemed very high. Fr. Dinand and the house consultors at Holy Cross were prepared to buy the property. Since Holy Cross was turning away by the summer of 1925 many qualified boarding applicants, the plan was proposed that boarding freshmen would study and be housed in this Newport property, and then proceed to Worcester for the remaining three years. During the summer, the province could use the place for a villa.

Since there were foreseen problems on possible and undesirable competition with other Catholic institutions in Rhode Island, plus the need for a welcome from Bishop Hickey of Providence, and the question of a Rhode Island charter for a part of an already going and chartered Massachusetts college, Fr. Dinand was designated to look into them. Bishop Hickey explained to Fr. Dinand in patently painful fashion the trouble which he had had with the Dominican Fathers at Providence College and especially their provincial. He believed he had met hostility and defiance. So raw did he find his relations with the Providence College group that for the present he could not welcome any second collegiate group of religious into his diocese. But he was most willing to have the Jesuits for a retreat house. The project for a separate Holy Cross freshman boarding class off the Hill ended here and the retreat house never eventuated.

The possibility of a retreat house somewhere in the vice-province was uppermost in the plans of Fr. O'Gorman. He proposed such a possibility to the consultors on February 1, 1922 and suggested that the director of the work be Fr. Joseph N. Dinand, at that date still socius to the Maryland-New York provincial. When rector at Holy Cross from 1911 to 1918, Fr. Dinand had begun a week-end retreat for men in the Holy Cross buildings when they were free from other occupants in late August or early September. These retreats continued even after Fr. Dinand's second term (1924-1927). They were discontinued in the middle thirties by Fr. Francis J. Dolan. By this time

Jesuit retreats were available at Cohasset. But the Holy Cross weekend retreat appealed to many men from Worcester and Worcester county. It would seem that they were becoming an administrative inconvenience, often a bureaucratic reason for discontinuing good projects. But what Fr. Dinand had begun during this first term at Holy Cross was fresh in the mind of Fr. O'Gorman in 1922, and he hoped to take advantage of it.

The consultors approved the idea of a retreat house, but were never satisfied with the proposed locations. Reading the consultors' minutes during these years makes one conscious of a New England bishop whom few perhaps have known as so well-disposed. By the summer of 1923, Bishop George Albert Guertin of Manchester, New Hampshire, proposed a property at Laconia for a retreat house. The consultors saw no reason to expand into New Hampshire especially if they were expected to buy the property which had a \$30,000 mortgage. Even if the land were a gift, they saw no reason for going there. Why go, they said, to New Hampshire with only 145,000 Catholics, in preference to the possibility (and that is all it was for years) of settling in the Hartford diocese with 550,000 Catholics? The bird in the bush (receding, if not a mirage) was more attractive than one nearly in hand.

The refusal to consider Laconia did not discourage Bishop Guertin. In the November 1923 consultors' meeting, the first one attended by Fr. Harding Fisher as consultor, a piece of property in Wakefield, New Hampshire was discussed as a site for a retreat house. If Laconia was too far, more so was Wakefield. Its distance, moreover, from salt water made it impossible as a summer villa. The consultors were told that Bishop Guertin was still searching for a site acceptable to the province views. He was on the watch for some property in Manchester, New Hampshire to be closer to population centers. Fr. Kilroy, when vice-provincial, and Fr. Joseph H. Rockwell visited the proposed Manchester location and seemed impressed. Fr. Rockwell, it might be noted, had during his years at Boston College instituted a guild for women teachers in Manchester. This was the Avila Guild which sponsored an annual retreat among its activities. But despite Bishop Guertin's efforts and welcome, nothing came of this third and seemingly last possibility. This failure reinforced the sorrow of Fr. General that there was no Jesuit establishment in northern New England.

In 1922, during the regio years, St. Mary's reached its 75th anniversary as a Jesuit church. This is thirteen years later than its 75th anniversary as a diocesan establishment in 1834. Parochial troubles began at St. Mary's by early 1842 when the followers of rival co-pastors each sought top position for their favorites. Even when both priests after some initial reconciliation had been transferred elsewhere one at a time, two succeeding pastors seemed incapable of dealing with rival factions. In such circumstances, Bishop Fitzpatrick requested, through his friend Fr. John McElroy, from Fr. Peter Verhaegan, a Missouri province man who was then the Maryland

province provincial, that the Jesuits take charge of St. Mary's. The task of pastorthen came to Fr. McElroy who had earlier that year conducted a diocesan priests' retreat as he had conducted the first one in the diocese in 1840. Whatever was the cause of the dispute among the factions of the laity, it seems to have been removed by the coming of the small Jesuit staff. Now in 1922, the 75th anniversary of this Jesuit assumption of the pastorate at St. Mary's was about to be commemorated. To make sure that its celebration in 1922 would not stand out as too starkly Jesuit, the pastor, Fr. A.J. Duarte, was instructed to confine the celebration to the parish and to be sure that the brochure prepared for the days of celebration be shown in advance to Cardinal O'Connell. No umbrage might then be taken at a simple and confined celebration of a Jesuit, as opposed to an archdiocesan, celebration of seventy-five years. This commemoration was taking place when former families and descendants of former families of St. Mary's still tended to return there for their Sunday worship for confession, and for the variety of other spiritual activities supplied by the parish. This loyalty may have caused some jealousy requiring wraps around the Jesuit celebration of the 75th year of the coming of Fr. McElroy and the quiet quelling of the parish discontent.

In 1923 a reorganization of college curricula under a committee chaired by Fr. Francis J. Connell had even wider effects than appeared on the surface. The chairman of this group was the author of a text on poetry which was the standard one in Jesuit schools even into the fifties. One significant aspect of the reorganization was to cease to require some courses that were previously prescribed for seniors and juniors. Among them were astronomy, geology, history of philosophy. Hence there was space for electives. Now electives could be offered in more ways than one. They could be so arranged as to constitute an upper-division sequence or as disparate subjects. The early tendency seems to have been to the latter, although pre-medical students seem to have been able to have as interrelated a series of courses as possible.

In 1924 Fr. Francis X. Downey, a former regent at Holy Cross from 1916 to 1918 and the prefect of studies at Regis High School in 1922-23, became the dean at Holy Cross in succession to Fr. James A. Mullen who had been prefect of studies there since 1908. The term "dean" replaced the older terminology of "prefect of studies" at this time. In a matter of a few years, Fr. Downey had made it possible for students other than pre-medics to acquire an upper-division sequence of courses in a single subject. Initially only a few academic subjects were thus structured; in time, many more. For years it was common practice for Jesuit colleges to have upper-division sequences in the junior and senior years with even a possible lead-in to them by one sophomore course. Now such sequences are extended downward. But upper-division sequences were so much a commonplace in the 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s that one might think they were as old as the Ratio of 1599. But here in New England, as elsewhere I dare say in the east, their genesis stemmed from the efforts slowly begun at

Holy Cross by Dean Downey. He also looked favorably on cutting down the number of course credits and of encouraging outside reading of material cognate to class work. This practice of collateral reading, even on a very limited scale, was all but revolutionary when it replaced a thorough, but exclusive, repetition in examination of what the professor had said in class without any benefit or disadvantage of competing views or data.

Those who taught at Holy Cross in Fr. Downey's day know that some oddities in conduct of his office led to another assignment for him in 1929. Any honest look, however, at what he began structurally shows that he brought Holy Cross clearly into the mainstream of 20th century collegiate education. With time his structural arrangement of elective sequences was imitated, or less fearfully carried out. One of the regents at Holy Cross in Fr. Downey's time, Fr. Joseph R.N. Maxwell, did much the same work for Boston College's elective system when he was dean between 1935 and 1939. When Fairfield opened its college, this whole system was assumed as appropriate. What once was innovative was then de rigueur.

About Fr. Downey, this item might be added as a James A. Broderick footnote. When Fr. Downey entered the Society in 1906, he was Irving J. Downey. Fr. George Petit, the novice master at Poughkeepsie from 1904 to 1917, did not approve of names such as Irving, even though novices then were not addressed as Irving, but as Brother Downey, and, only a short time before, as Carissime Downey. So a year later the name is listed in the province catalogue as Francis X.J. Downey. In a short time, the J. (for whatever it stood) was dropped, and henceforth he was Francis X. Downey. It is said that there are other such changes in undesirable names. I have looked through old catalogues and have not found any; perhaps the change took place before the baptismal name was first recorded under a new one in the catalogue. Since some of Fr. Petit's novices still survive and honor his memory as Yonkers men do Larry Kelly, they might be able to give added information. Someone of them may even have such a religious name.

As a final item in this chapter which has progress as well as so many might-have-beens from 1921 to 1926, there is cited an offer which envisaged both a school (either college or high school) and a retreat house. When John Gregory Murray, Holy Cross, 1897, became Bishop of Portland in 1925, (the second of five Holy Cross College bishops of Portland: Healy, Murray, McCarthy, Feeney and O'Leary) he turned for aid to his friend, Fr. Joseph N. Dinand. This eloquent rector of Holy Cross (Roaring Joe) had preached at the solemn benediction in the evening of the bishop's consecration as auxiliary of Hartford in April, 1920. Bishop Murray told Fr. Dinand that he expected either a Jesuit high school or college in Portland. He was disappointed in Cheverus which had begun in 1917, and which was conducted by diocesan clergy. Murray had some unspecified property in view and he believed that the diocese should aid in financing his proposed ed-

ucational project. When a similar request was expressed directly by the bishop to Fr. Kilroy, the vice-provincial, he had requested a delay on any formal request until the vice-province was an independent province. Shortly before the final division, Murray had called reiterating his desire for a high school or college, and adding a request for a retreat house. By letter he proposed the latter at Cape Elizabeth. Since Fr. General had written in 1924 that he was grieved that there was no Jesuit foundation in northern New England, it was presumed that Roman permission for a retreat house would easily be granted. The bishop added that the Cape Elizabeth foundation might become the location also for some educational venture. With the ending of the vice-provincial phase in New England Jesuit life, this proposal also seems to have ended. Liquidating debts on a scholasticate at Weston and the feeding and educating of men in all phases of training seemed to preclude expansion. Primum est vivere, or, improve what you have, according to the mind of Fr. Joseph Hanselman.



Boston College, 1925