Purcell was an Irish bishop of a German city. Until after the Civil War, 75 percent of newly appointed bishops were foreign-born. From the 1830s to the 1860s thousands of German Catholic immigrants, unlike the Irish who tended to concentrate more in the East, made their way to the “German triangle,” extending from Milwaukee to St. Louis to Cincinnati. Across the East and Midwest, Catholicism became an urban church as immigrants flooded the cities. Cincinnati’s population nearly doubled every ten years in the first half of the nineteenth century. Whereas Catholicism in most nations of Europe and in the Middle East was influenced by their respective cultures and was culturally quite homogeneous, in the United States it was different. This was especially true in the diocese of Cincinnati. Well into the second half of the nineteenth century, among the German, Irish, French, and Dutch immigrants, the Irish and the German Catholics had the most visible impact on the local church. Catholicism in the diocese steadily moved in the direction of becoming a church of immigrants. Both groups, like later immigrants, had to adjust to the American ways of life while attempting to preserve their own unique European heritages. Because of the needs of immigrant life, local Catholicism increasingly developed religious and ethnic solidarity and institutional separatism.

GERMAN CATHOLICS

In the diocese Cincinnati had the largest concentration of German Catholics. They, along with German Jews, Protestants, and freethinkers, were the dominant ethnic group to settle in southwest Ohio in the nineteenth century. For
part of the 1840s German Catholics were coming into the city at the rate of two hundred or more a day. In 1841 the historian Charles Cist estimated the German population of Cincinnati to be 14,163 of the 46,382 inhabitants of the city. Whereas he estimated three-fourths of them to be Catholic, Purcell thought that at least two-thirds were Catholic. The estimate from baptismal statistics for 1840 indicates a total of 13,344, among whom were 8,800 Germans and 4,544 English, including the Irish.\(^2\)

Catholic parishes traditionally had been organized territorially. People living in a designated area belonged to the same parish. As in other urban centers in the nineteenth century, this posed a problem for the local church. German and Irish Catholics did not want to worship together. Instances of ethnic conflict occurred between them. When the Irish and German Catholics shared St. Peter in Chains Cathedral in the early 1830s, one German chronicler wrote that the Germans endured "arrogant treatment" from the Irish. An example of such treatment took place in the fall of 1833 when Frederic Rese, who had been appointed bishop of Detroit, received episcopal ordination in the Cincinnati cathedral. The ceremonies were held at the time designated for the Sunday Mass of English-speaking Catholics. When the German Catholics arrived in a procession to participate in the episcopal ceremony, they were locked out of the cathedral. Undaunted, the Germans broke down the front doors. The following year they built their own church.\(^3\)

Like some bishops in the East and Midwest, Purcell responded to the challenge of ethnic diversity in his diocese by allowing the establishment of national parishes. As more Germans arrived and faced the challenge of adjusting to the American situation while preserving their own religious heritage, the national parish became the norm. Purcell acknowledged the desire for the Germans to establish churches and organizations for their own use. For his part, he would do his best to recruit German-speaking clergy and religious. As more German-born priests, religious, and lay people came to the diocese, espousing a familiar and traditional European model of Catholicism, each decade saw a gradually increasing Europeanization of local church practices.\(^4\)

In the see city most of the Germans occupied the northern territories. As a low-lying area surrounded by hills about 400 feet high, Cincinnati consisted of a flat "west end" on one side of the basin, flat "east end" on the other, and a northern edge. The Miami and Erie Canal, today's Central Parkway route, crossed the basin about halfway between the Ohio River and the hills. German Catholics established twelve parishes between 1835 and 1870, each with a parochial school, near the Miami and Erie Canal. The German laity had a central role in the organization and development of these parishes. Purcell accommodated this lay initiative by largely leaving the direction of
the German Catholic community to its clerical and lay leaders. Under the directives issued by the pragmatic Purcell in 1851, which probably confirmed the already existing arrangements in the German parishes, each German parish was to have six elected laymen who were at various times called trustees, wardens, or counselors to assist the pastor in the operation of the parish. Elected annually by the men of the parish, the trustees were to be over thirty years of age, pewholders in the church, and of good character as demonstrated by making the annual Easter communion. The age of eligibility for election by 1865 was decreased to twenty-one. Though the bishop confirmed the trustees in office and could remove them, there is no evidence that this ever happened in the diocese. The trustees met with the pastor at least once a month. As they dealt largely with administrative matters, especially the expenditure of church income, the trustees were particularly advised to pay off the parish debts. The financial records were examined annually by the vicar general and two assistant priests. By asserting their lay rights and powers, these laymen helped establish the local churches on a democratic as well as on a sound financial and material basis.5

The self-government that the German parishes were permitted resulted from the positive and unique relationship the Germans enjoyed with the bishop of Cincinnati. In the process, the Germans developed a rich subculture distinctive in language. During the course of the nineteenth century they established organizations and institutions that helped them keep their traditions, beliefs, and language alive as they adjusted to their new environment. Most importantly, they preserved their language in their homes, churches, and neighborhoods. “The first movement of German Catholics in a new settlement,” Purcell observed, was “to build a church and a schoolhouse.” Whenever possible, they heard sermons in their mother tongue and practiced the devotions and customs of western Germany. Religious affiliation proved essential as an organizing force.6

Purcell often praised the German Catholic parishioners on their accomplishments. Their faith and schools impressed him. “The proximity of the churches to one another,” Purcell wrote, “the length of the processions with banners and sacred music” that went to meet him from place to place, “and the great numbers confirmed as well as communicants and attendance at DAILY MASS” testified to their piety. Pleased with their initiative and support of educational and church functions, he permitted the German Catholic clergy and laity to direct their own affairs with rare intervention by his office. In each parish Germans established parish societies, or vereins, that helped support the “ornamenting and embellishing” of the church as well as connect the members more closely to the religious practices of the parish church. Cornerstone laying and church and school dedications in German Catholic
parishes were always attended by public processions. While visiting the Min-
ster congregation in the winter of 1840, the bishop commented in the
Catholic Telegraph on some of the people's qualities. The German was
"attached by association and grace . . . to the religious customs of his native
land," he wrote, and "loves to hold a piece of ground that he can call his own;
his suffers inconceivable privations that he may pay for it." Before purchas-
ing a home or farm German Catholics were advised to take into considera-
tion church and school, to purchase in those areas where a large Catholic
population could be found. Without proximity to a church, Purcell argued,
a family's property could lose "more than half of its value."

When Canon Josef Salzbacher of Vienna visited the United States in 1842,
he reported that the diocese of Cincinnati had more German-speaking
Catholics than any other diocese in the country. Even though there were more
Catholics in the eastern dioceses than in the western ones, Cincinnati was a
center of German Catholicism. A decade later a visitor to the Queen City
observed that the east side and northern periphery of the city teemed "with
German faces" and that one could "hear the dialects of Baden, Swabia,
Bavaria, Austria, Frankfurt, Berlin, Plattdeutsch, and also some Yiddish." 
Making reference to the German churches built from German money, he
noted that "in no other city of the Union have I observed such a deep
Catholicity, so much zeal for the glory of God, such beautiful harmony among
our German brethren of the Faith, as in Cincinnati." Though the eastern side
of the city never became exclusively German, the predominance of Germans
and their culture had such an impact that it became known as "Over-the-
Rhine," Cincinnati's little Germany. As in other mid-nineteenth century
cities, most of the poor people and new arrivals tended to live on the outer
boundary of the city, whereas the wealthier residents lived in the center.

From the start Purcell established a good rapport with the German
Catholics. Shortly after his arrival in Cincinnati, Purcell decided in 1833 to
build Cincinnati's first German Catholic Church. In light of the fact that the
diocese had already spent the money raised by the German Catholics to build
a church, the bishop began soliciting pledges and recorded in his journal that
"the Germans . . . subscribed liberally towards the erection of the contem-
plated church." Anticipating the spread of the German-speaking population
to the northern edge of Cincinnati, as land there was less expensive than in
the city, Purcell purchased land on West Fifth Street for $3,000. On Sunday,
October 5, 1834, Holy Trinity Church, the second Catholic Church in the city
and the first national parish for German Catholics west of the Alleghenies,
was dedicated. It was built "in a high and healthy part of the city," the
Catholic Telegraph wrote, "commanding a noble view of the green hills of
Kentucky." The ceremony proved to be the most solemn event that so far
had taken place in the see city. Bishops Purcell and Flaget, ten priests, sixteen seminarians, and members of the laity were in attendance.\textsuperscript{9}

The dedication of Holy Trinity Church was a very special moment for the bishop. Less than a year after beginning his episcopal duties he had helped form a new parish, with Henry Damian Juncker as pastor, for the Germans. The total cost of building the church, including the lot, was $18,000. Shortly after its founding a parochial school was started in the church that recruited non-Catholic as well as Catholic Germans. In its first year the parish school attracted some 150 pupils. By 1840 there were four laymen in the school, teaching as many as 350 children per day. “It was amusing to see a little Irish boy,” the Catholic Telegraph reported, “reading and praying in German, with as Saxon a tongue and as pure and intelligent a cadence as any of his young compeers.”\textsuperscript{10}

Shortly after the founding of Holy Trinity parish German Catholics again expressed the desire for a separate boys’ orphanage for Cincinnati’s German Catholics. Following the bishop’s unsuccessful attempt in the mid-1830s to
get the Sisters of Charity to establish a separate boys’ orphanage for Cincinnati’s German Catholics, John Henni, now pastor of Holy Trinity Church, interested several parishioners in the matter. In less than two years after the establishment of the parish Purcell had summoned the twenty-eight-year-old Henni, who had been serving the German parish at Canton and surrounding mission stations, to replace Juncker as pastor. There had been a falling out over some now unknown issue between the trustees of the church and Juncker. In January 1837 Henni called a parish meeting for the purpose of forming the St. Aloysius Orphan Society. The thirty founding members agreed to pay a membership fee of twenty-five cents per month for the care of the orphans. The growth of the St. Aloysius Orphan Society, headed by the layman J. B. Germann, was very rapid. In two months’ time it had 155 dues-paying members. The organization placed the boys in its charge in German family homes until such time an orphanage could be secured.11

Toward that end, the orphan society decided to publish the Wahrheitsfreund, the first German Catholic newspaper in the country, to help obtain funds for the care of the orphans. The great increase of the German Catholic population and its interest in preserving its own language led to the Wahrheitsfreund publication. In the midst of German Protestants and a German-speaking Jewish community, the German Catholics in Cincinnati comprised the largest religious subculture. Henni had thought for some time that they needed their own newspaper. Under the editorship of Henni, the first publication of Wahrheitsfreund was on July 20, 1837. Its surplus funds were regularly paid to the St. Aloysius Orphan Association. Even though Germans spoke a number of different dialects, the Wahrheitsfreund became a valuable medium of communication among the scattered German-speaking Catholics, instructing its readers in doctrine and religious practice and informing them of the state of Catholicity locally and throughout the United States. By midcentury it was one of four German language newspapers in Cincinnati. Catholic Germans were held together by a common consciousness of kinship and by a network of churches, schools, voluntary associations, and newspapers.12

In the spring of 1839 the St. Aloysius Orphan Society succeeded in purchasing a nine-room house on West Sixth Street, close to the school, to accommodate the orphanage for boys. The orphanage opened on June 21st, the feast of St. Aloysius. Though two competent lay women were paid to run the orphanage from 1839 to 1842, Purcell wanted religious personnel in the institution. In the spring of 1842 the bishop again approached the Sisters of Charity at Emmitsburg, requesting that the sisters, who spoke German, take charge of the orphanage that then numbered twenty-seven. The orphan boys “extend their hands to you imploring you not to abandon them,” he wrote.
"For God's sake, write soon to tell me that the Sisters are coming for St. Aloysius' Asylum." He assured the mother superior that even though the management of German congregations by lay trustees had been a source of much anxiety in some dioceses, there were no such problems in Cincinnati. By late summer three sisters were assigned to the orphanage. However, their stay was short-lived.13

The Sisters of Charity took charge of St. Aloysius Orphanage from 1842 to 1846, caring for as many as fifty-three boys per year. In late 1845, however, Louis Denuel, Sulpician superior of the Sisters of Charity, informed Purcell that by order of Emmitsburg authorities, who prohibited members of their order from operating a boys' orphanage, the sisters in Cincinnati were to leave the orphanage. Both Purcell and Bishop Hughes of New York, who was experiencing similar difficulties with the Sisters of Charity relinquishment of boys' orphanages in his diocese, appealed unsuccessfully to Emmitsburg. Like some other communities, the Sisters of Charity—who were at the time taking steps to become affiliated with the Daughters of Charity in France—clung to the letter of the French rule that described the work of the sisters as caring for girls. Some thought that contact with young boys endangered the virtue of the women religious. To the German Catholics' disappointment, in 1846 the Sisters of Charity were reassigned to other missions. Unsuccessful in replacing the sisters at the German orphanage with another religious order, the orphanage had to rely again on lay personnel, not unlike what the Catholic Germans continued to do in their parochial boys' schools.

Henry Schulhof was appointed superintendent of the orphanage. He and his wife received a nominal salary per year in addition to their board and lodging. In 1850 the St. Aloysius Orphan Society opened a girls' orphanage on Abigail Street, now East Twelfth, with Mary Wiggermann in charge. In the fall of 1851 the St. Aloysius boys' orphanage was destroyed by fire, killing three of the 132 children. The St. Aloysius Orphan Society immediately resolved "to provide the children again with a convenient and comfortable home." In 1856 the boys' orphanage was moved to new accommodations on sixty acres of land in the suburb of Bond Hill. Five years later the girls joined them. In May 1877 the German-speaking Sisters of Notre Dame from Cleveland took charge of the orphanage.14

In 1840 Henni and his two assistants at Holy Trinity Church attended to the spiritual needs of approximately 9,000 Germans in the parish, nearly double the number of German Catholics in the city at the time of Purcell's installation. Almost twice as many German Catholics were being baptized each year than in the English-speaking church. The continuing influx of thousands of German immigrants into the city made it imperative that another church be erected for the German-speaking people. As more and
more Germans settled in Over-the-Rhine, Holy Trinity Church, located in the lower part of Cincinnati, was far from the emerging German neighborhood. There was "scarcely a city in the United States where two new churches are wanted more than in Cincinnati," the Catholic Telegraph wrote. It argued that both the English-speaking cathedral and Holy Trinity Church were insufficient "to contain" the overflowing Catholic population. "[I]t is obvious to every observing mind," Purcell wrote, "that the places of our tents must be still further enlarged and their cords lengthened on every side." The Catholic Telegraph also expressed concern that the German-speaking people, who were better organized than the Irish and English-speaking Catholics, would more likely "outstrip us in the race" of building a new church.¹⁵

The diocesan paper's prediction was well founded. In 1841 a committee of German Catholics purchased land in the city in Purcell's name and selected the site for St. Mary Church on Thirteenth between Clay and Main Streets in Over-the-Rhine. Purcell made a substantial contribution of about $7,000 toward the building of the church, and the congregation assumed the debt for the remaining $7,000. What the parishioners could not pay in cash they contributed in work. The parishioners themselves as brick makers manufactured the bricks that were used for the church; the women fashioned them, and the men baked them in homemade kilns. A procession of the clergy, members of the St. Peter Benevolent Society and St. Aloysius Orphan Society, other laypersons, and schoolchildren dressed in white marched through the streets and attended St. Mary's dedication ceremonies on July 3, 1842. The ceremony involved the entire Catholic community, both German and English. Purcell addressed the congregation in English, Henni in German.¹⁶

Clement Hammer, a recent arrival from Bohemia and assistant to Henni at Holy Trinity Church, was appointed pastor of St. Mary parish. Having made acquaintance with Father Joseph Ferneding at Vincennes, Hammer prevailed on him to leave his diocese to come to Cincinnati and become his assistant. When Henni became the first bishop of Milwaukee in 1844, Purcell appointed Ferneding vicar general and put him in charge of St. Aloysius Orphanage. Henni's departure from Cincinnati was a great loss to the diocese. He had accomplished much, especially among the German Catholics. The local church had come to appreciate his ability and talents, especially as editor of the Wahrheitsfreund. Moreover, St. Aloysius had now lost not only his services but also his guiding spirit. Six years after the founding of St. Mary Church, three German-speaking Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, who had arrived in Cincinnati in 1840 from Belgium, were placed in charge of the education of the girls of St. Mary's. The education of the
boys of the parish was begun in 1852 when brothers of the Society of Mary, who had recently arrived in Cincinnati from France, agreed to conduct the school.17

As more German immigrants in the 1840s moved to Over-the-Rhine, Ferneding and parishioners at St. Mary's helped organize in the fall of 1844 another German Catholic congregation in the city. Statistics for 1844 reveal that at St. Mary's there were 521 baptisms, 167 marriages, and 252 burials as compared to 400 baptisms, 70 marriages, 150 burials in the cathedral parish and 270 baptisms, 78 marriages, and 118 burials in the Holy Trinity parish. That year German Catholics purchased land in Over-the-Rhine and established St. John the Baptist parish. On March 25 more than twelve thousand people, headed by Purcell and the clergy, marched in procession to lay the cornerstone of the new church. This was the bishop's first public appearance in Cincinnati in his episcopal robes. As the procession progressed along Vine Street, "every door, every window, crowded with respectful and seemingly delighted spectators," the Catholic Telegraph wrote, "... the crosses, banners, vestments sparkling in the sun-beams, the clergy chanting in solemn tone the psalms. ... [And] two excellent bands of music, one in front, the other in the rear, alternately playing slow and measured marches," produced an effect that "was truly imposing." Five months later in a parish meeting the community resolved to build a school. In November St. John Baptist Church was dedicated. By 1860 St. John's had become the largest parish of the diocese. From 1849 to 1859 it witnessed 7,814 baptisms and 1,826 marriages, an annual average of 710 and 166, respectively.18

As the northern side of Cincinnati was filling with new arrivals from Germany, Purcell appealed for more German-speaking missionary priests and religious from Europe. In 1840 there were thirty-eight priests in the diocese. Five of them were from Germany. In addition to the five natives from Germany, there were five others who spoke German. Though all ten devoted their time to the care of the German Catholics in Ohio, the diocese needed more German-speaking priests. As most Germans did not understand English, it especially made confessions difficult. In the early 1840s Bishop Purcell requested German priests from the superiors of the Jesuit and Redemptorist Orders. Though neither request at the time was fulfilled, more individual German priests did come to the diocese. By 1844 there were five German priests and six German teachers at Cincinnati, and the communities at Glandorf, Minster, Columbus, Zanesville, Dayton, Lancaster, Canton, and Chillicothe each had a German priest and a German school. Though the local church reaped some success in attracting German priests, not every diocese was that fortunate. Bishop Peter Kenrick of St. Louis asked Purcell if he could spare one of his "excellent German priests," pointing out that his diocese did
not have an “efficient” one, nor a separate church for the more than 4,000 German Catholics. Purcell did not oblige.19

It was this need for more German priests that brought the German-speaking religious order of Franciscans into the diocese of Cincinnati. On his visit to Europe in 1839 Purcell had obtained the brown-robed Franciscan, Francis Louis Huber of Bavaria. Huber, who five years later would become pastor of Holy Trinity parish, was one of seven priests who came to the United States with the bishop. Unable to secure further help from the Bavarian Province, Purcell appealed successfully to another German-speaking province, that of St. Leopold of Tyrol, Austria. As a consequence of that visit, Father William Unterthiner arrived in Cincinnati in October 1844 and became one of the most eloquent orators of the day.20

Over time Huber encountered difficulties with the German Catholics of Holy Trinity parish. Parishioners found him too authoritarian and accused him of controlling the parish money and making expenditures without authorization from the trustees. After Purcell asked him in 1848 to leave Holy Trinity Church, and he refused, the bishop removed him. Huber, who had some lay supporters, appealed both to Archbishop Eccleston of Baltimore and to Roman officials. Though they disapproved of his conduct, they refused to interfere. At the December 1848 diocesan synod, the thirty-seven priests in attendance condemned him and urged his departure in signed statements that were published in the Catholic Telegraph and Wahrheitsfreund. As tension mounted, Huber’s Franciscan superiors ordered him to leave the diocese of Cincinnati and return to Bavaria. The case went to the religious courts and Huber was finally ejected from the rectory by force. He left Cincinnati in 1850.21

As the German Catholic population continued to grow in Cincinnati, more separate churches for the German Catholics were built. By 1847 Cincinnati had six German parishes, adding St. Philomena’s on the south side of East Third Street, St. Joseph’s on the west side of town below the western hills, and St. Michael’s in lower Price Hill to the previous three. From 1843 to 1848 there was an increase of 111 percent in the number of baptisms in the German parishes of the city, from 787 to 1,661. That was twice the number of baptisms in Cincinnati’s English-speaking churches. From St. Joseph parish there developed in the succeeding years the German parishes of St. Augustine, St. Anthony, St. Henry, and St. Stanislaus, all in the western end. Under the guidance of vicar general Ferneding, German-speaking Catholics formed St. Paul parish in 1848 in Over-the-Rhine. After the trustees of the parish purchased real estate, they subdivided it into residential lots that they sold, and with the proceeds they helped pay for the land and the construction of the church. Other German parishes like St. Michael in
lower Price Hill and St. Anthony in Madisonville also sold lots to defray some of the parish expenses. The bishop, through the Catholic Telegraph, encouraged English-speaking as well as German parishes to speculate in lots “for the advancement of religion” in the diocese. By 1850 the Franciscans had also helped organize the parishes of St. Clement in St. Bernard and the Fourteen Martyrs in Reading.22

Under the supervision of Edward Purcell, the bishop’s brother, the archdiocese in the early 1850s built St. Augustine Church near the convent of the Ursuline Sisters on Bank Street, serving both as a chapel for the Ursulines and as a parish church. The congregation consisted of English-speaking as well as German Catholics. Because of the influx of German immigrants in the community, however, in 1857 the parish was transferred to the German-speaking Catholics, for which they paid the archdiocese $15,000 in three years at six percent interest. Purcell also attached the condition that the English-speaking parishioners who remained in the area would “always have the right to assist at . . . Mass, to rent seats, to receive the Sacraments and to have the pastor . . . assist them with the holy rites of the Church when in danger of death.” In the fall of 1869, German Catholics bought a meeting-house of the Disciples of Christ, a Protestant denomination, on the southwest corner of Walnut and Eighth Streets. The purchase price was $30,000, and the property was transferred to Purcell. After a few renovations it was named in honor of St. Louis on March 13, 1870. On the day of the dedication about 2,000 people marched in a parade, consisting of six divisions of German Catholic societies, two of English, and one of Italian. In the shelter of these parishes, German Catholics found nurture and care and a strong sense of identity. All of them, but the Church of the Immaculata, were the products of the initiative of German Catholics who participated in fund-raising and building committees.23

Wanting to dedicate a church to the Virgin Mary, Purcell in 1859 had taken the initiative in building for German Catholics Immaculate Conception Church, commonly called Immaculata, in Mount Adams, one of the city’s oldest and most conspicuous hilltop neighborhoods. The archbishop provided the ground and the stone, donated $10,000, and urged Catholics to donate generously to its erection. “When this Beacon Light shines over the city,” Purcell wrote, “let every one who sees it remember with pleasure the help he gave to place it on its watch-tower.” Perched high above the surrounding countryside, Immaculata commanded a panoramic view and was removed from the noise of the city below.24

In 1871 the seventy-one-year-old Purcell was delighted to hear the news that the German-speaking Passionist Fathers agreed to take charge of Immaculata. In March 1872 the order also opened a mission at the cathedral
for the Italian Catholics of the city. That same year they acquired the old observatory property, just two blocks west of the church. The land had formerly been a portion of the estate of Nicholas Longworth, who had given the four-acre plot to the Cincinnati Astronomical Society for an observatory. At the same time that the order in 1873 remodeled the observatory building into a monastery, it built Holy Cross Church in Mount Adams for the Irish and Italian Catholics residing there. The congregation of the Immaculata had been mixed, being composed largely of Germans, Irish, and a few Italians. The Passionist Fathers attended to both churches in Mount Adams.\(^{25}\)

As the Franciscans searched for a location for a convent of their order, the St. Clement congregation in St. Bernard presented them with land and a contribution of $800. The Franciscans were resolved to combine the furthering of the monastic life and vocation with active work in the ministry. As early as 1851, Purcell had hoped the Franciscans, who had become increasingly more involved in the local German community, would establish a monastery in the city. But when the Franciscan William Untermhiner died in 1857 there appeared to be no hope for the Franciscans to establish a monastery and firm foundation in America. Consequently, their superior ordered the recall of all the Franciscans from Cincinnati. But the local Franciscans, with Purcell's support, wanted to remain in Cincinnati. Not only did the archbishop give them permission to open an academy and seminary, but also transferred in perpetuity to them the property of St. John Baptist Church and land owned by the archdiocese at Vine and Liberty Streets in the east end of the city. The church and parish of St. Francis Seraph with a monastery and novitiate, a place where persons who had entered the order resided, were established on the site of the first Catholic church and cemetery in Cincinnati. In 1859 the Franciscans' mission was elevated to the status of a custody, or vice province, the first step in the foundation of a province. Father Otto Jair was appointed custos, or superior, of the new establishment.\(^{26}\)

Throughout the remainder of Purcell's administration, the Franciscans were extensively involved in the expansion of the local church. Under the supervision of the Franciscan Candid Koslowksi, the first Polish parish in the archdiocese, St. Stanislaus, was organized in 1873. After purchasing the Lutheran Church at the corner of Liberty and Cutter Streets in the west end in the spring of 1875, the St. Stanislaus Parochial Society immediately renovated the church for religious services. Until then the Poles had been scattered throughout Cincinnati and had been attending services at the nearest Catholic church within their reach. The Franciscans also provided chaplains to various archdiocesan institutions, such as hospitals, orphanages, prisons, and convents, which needed priests on a part-time basis. Otto Jair was a prominent figure in this period. In addition to working tirelessly on Fran-
ciscan matters, he also took part in archdiocesan affairs. He was appointed vicar general of the archdiocese of Cincinnati for German-speaking Catholics in 1872, a position he held until 1883.27

By midcentury German Catholics were also well concentrated in southern and rural western Ohio, in and around Norwalk in northern Ohio, in Canton in the northeastern part of the state, and in such communities as Lancaster, Columbus, and Chillicothe in central Ohio. In virtually every mission of the diocese, there were German Catholic families. In light of the scarcity of German-speaking priests, that posed a problem for the diocese. Father John Doherty, English-speaking pastor at Massillon, wrote to Purcell in the spring of 1844 that his parishes were "almost entirely German who can neither speak nor understand English and consequently are incapable of deriving any profit from my instructions." The diocese had to rely, especially during the Easter and Christmas seasons, on the priests from the larger centers of the German Catholic population to care for them.28

In the 1840s Purcell scored a coup. He obtained the priests of the Congregation of the Precious Blood from Alsace for the German parishes in the northwestern section of Ohio. On New Year's Day in 1844, seven priests and seven brothers of the congregation with their superior Francis de Sales Brunner arrived in Cincinnati. They took charge of St. John the Baptist parish and founded the convent of Maria Stein. The community then took over the Church of St. Augustine at Minster, which had been attended to by the secular clergy since 1834. During Purcell's administration the order played an important part in the development of the diocese, especially in the smaller towns and rural communities in Mercer, Auglaize, and Shelby Counties. In 1861 the Precious Blood priests, led by Father Joseph Dwenger and a Catholic layman, also founded and operated St. Charles Borromeo Seminary at Carthagena. The same year that the clergy arrived in Cincinnati, two sisters of the Precious Blood and a novice also arrived on July 22nd in the diocese and opened a school at the little mission of St. Alphonse in Peru. This was the beginning of the activity of the Precious Blood sisters in American education. Purcell's success in obtaining the Precious Blood fathers, brothers, and sisters helped address the needs of German Catholics in northern and western Ohio. Bishop Blanc of New Orleans probably echoed other bishops' sentiments when he wrote to Purcell in January 1845: "I congratulate you and your good German Catholics, for such an acquisition—indeed, you beat us all!"29

ESTABLISHMENT OF OTHER IMMIGRANT PARISHES

As the diocese of Cincinnati underwent expansion in the 1840s the bishop and members of his congregation also paid special attention to the potato failure
in Ireland. The famine in Purcell’s native land in the years 1845 to 1847 brought waves of Irish English-speaking immigrants to American shores, more particularly to Cincinnati. This immigration helped increase the proportion of English-speaking Catholics. Between 1843 and 1852 the number of baptisms in the Catholic English-speaking churches in the episcopal city jumped from 32 percent of the total number of baptisms to 44 percent. As the Irish famine worsened, the Catholic Telegraph, like so many other Catholic newspapers at this time, encouraged relief sent to Ireland. By August 1848 the diocesan paper, though cautious in its stance, became more supportive of the use of physical force in the revolution in Ireland, even suggesting financial assistance to help the cause. “[W]hen we consider the horrible character of the oppression to which the people have been subjected,” it wrote, “we cannot condemn the appeal to arms no matter what may be the result.” By the following month, however, Purcell put a stop to the editorial policy of the Catholic Telegraph on the Irish issue, indicating doubt about the success of the revolution. He argued that if the millions of Irish “at home” could not succeed, then “the hundreds, or thousands here, cannot accomplish more. Money sent to such a people, unless to buy bread for the starving, is absolutely thrown away. . . . [W]e can do [them] . . . no good.”

From that point on the diocesan paper advised the faithful to attend to the needs of the Irish settling in the diocese, arguing that charity should begin at home. The Irish Emigrant Society was formed to guard the newcomers “against vicious associations and to provide them with employment.” Among those who came to the Queen City were the bishop’s mother and his sisters Catherine and Margaret, arriving in the summer of 1847. The bishop was able to place them with the Ursuline Sisters, who had taken charge of St. Martin Convent in Brown County in 1845. Mrs. Purcell and Catherine remained with the Ursulines, whereas Margaret got married and subsequently moved to New Orleans.

Before long the cathedral church was not large enough to accommodate the many newcomers. As many Irish Catholics resided in the first, third, and fourth wards on the southwestern edge and in the most undesirable parts of the city along the riverfront, Purcell oversaw in 1850 the building of St. Patrick Church on Third and Mill Streets. Two decades later it also became necessary to relieve the overtaxed capacities of the two city’s English-speaking churches. Out of St. Patrick parish and the cathedral came the parish of the Atonement on West Third Street in 1870. The church was completed in 1873. Another church that grew out of St. Patrick parish was the Blessed Sacrament Church in lower Price Hill, closer to the Ohio River and farther west than the Atonement parish, to accommodate the more than 100 Irish families that had settled below Price Hill. Father John Mackey, the pastor of
St. Patrick's, helped establish in 1874 a combination church, school, and parsonage.32

Like their German counterparts, religion for the Irish was central to their way of life. The parish church, which was a basis for group solidarity and pride, was an important identifying mark in their neighborhood. Whereas among German Catholics there was a strong tradition of lay involvement in parish affairs, the Irish had long been accustomed to being more dependent on the clergy on religious matters. They lacked a tradition of parish self-government, due in part to the leadership role played by priests in Ireland, where they served as guardians of Irish culture in the face of British rule. Moreover, since the transfer in 1822 of the ownership of ecclesiastical property to Bishop Fenwick by the Irish trustees of Christ Church, the system of lay trustees in the diocese of Cincinnati appeared to have been confined to the German parishes. Purcell's 1851 directives applied only to Germans. In 1865 Purcell distinguished between the operation of Irish and German parishes, noting that "without extending the [trustee] system where it is neither necessary, nor desired, we approve of it where it does exist." In contrast to German custom, the Irish tradition of an authoritarian clergy and deferential laity was commonplace. Though the Irish were not as active as the Germans in the organization and government of local parishes, they were by no means passive in parish life.33

In the mid-1850s the Jesuits began making plans to replace their little wooden St. Xavier Church, which largely attended to Irish and English-speaking Catholics, on Sycamore Street in Cincinnati. Even though a few years earlier Purcell had bought the Methodist Episcopal Church on Sycamore Street to take care of the overflow at St. Xavier, and had it dedicated to St. Thomas, the St. Xavier congregation needed a larger church. In February 1860 the work of dismantling and demolishing the St. Xavier Church began. During the demolition one of the walls fell, crushing thirteen laborers beneath its weight. At once the various Catholic congregations took up a collection for the relief of the families. In January 1861 the Jesuits held dedication ceremonies of the new St. Xavier Church. During the Civil War the archbishop bought property in the western end of the city and Catholics in the vicinity established another English-speaking parish, with St. Edward as its church.34

About two decades after the demolition of the old St. Xavier Church, the congregation experienced another tragedy. On Good Friday morning, April 7, 1882, a fire destroyed the interior of St. Xavier Church and steeple. William Henry Elder, then Cincinnati's coadjutor bishop, wrote about the church's "blackened walls and charred timbers." He noted that the crowds of English-speaking Catholics, who:
every Good Friday had made a pilgrimage to kiss the big crucifix, now gazed on ruins, bewailing, crying—not figuratively, but literally. The big wooden cross, 16 feet long, from the top of the steeple, falling and lying on the sidewalk, [was] muddy with the water of the engines. Spontaneously some good soul knelt and kissed the broken cross lying on the pavement. Others followed and almost all day they were kneeling on the curbstone, a dozen at a time, to kiss that cross; emblem of the ruin of their Church, and of the love of their Saviour.\textsuperscript{15}

The total loss amounted to about $200,000. Under the leadership of the Jesuits and the pastor, Charles Driscoll, who would serve as pastor for more than thirty-five years, immediate steps were taken to rebuild the church. Contributions came in encouragingly and generously. Within two weeks, more than $40,000 were raised. By March 1883 the church had been rebuilt.

In the summer of 1852 the Lutheran Church at the corner of Liberty and Walnut Streets was purchased and converted into the first Dutch Catholic Church in the archdiocese. John Van Luytelaar was named pastor of St. Willibord Church in 1853. Seven years later the parish disbanded, and most of the few parishioners moved with Van Luytelaar to a new settlement in Missouri. Later that decade forty Catholic English-speaking families in the eastern part of Cincinnati broke away from Christ parish and helped organize in 1859, with Father Michael O’Sullivan’s assistance, the parish of Holy Angels at O’Bryonville, which sat in suburban hills on the eastern side of town. Purcell provided a loan of $7,000 to help build a large church that was completed in 1861. In time Purcell cancelled the debt. This was not the first time that the archbishop assisted congregations by canceling debts owed to the archdiocese.\textsuperscript{16}

In the midst of the growing Catholic population and increasing number of churches, the bishop’s travels in the diocese in the 1840s proved more arduous and challenging. By the mid-1840s Purcell carried out his visitations in the alternate years 1844, 1846, 1848 and 1850, ranging from two months to four months in length. As before, these trips afforded him opportunities not only to strengthen relations with Catholic parishes and clergy but also to preach to non-Catholics. Throughout his life, Purcell was in demand for special occasion sermons. On his 1844 trip he preached in a Lutheran church at Lancaster, in courthouses at Woodfield, St. Clairsville, Mount Vernon, Tiffin, and Canton, and in a Methodist church at Wooster. In the odd years, he limited his visitations to about two weeks at a time, usually short trips generally in the vicinity of the see city.\textsuperscript{17}

Purcell’s visitations also enabled him to see some of the work of his missionaries firsthand. He was especially pleased with the pastoral work of the
French missionaries he had brought to his diocese from Europe. William Cheymol and Claude Gacon worked at St. Martin's in Brown County; Louis Navarron worked among the French Catholics about the present towns of Frenchtown, Versailles, and Russia in Darke and Shelby Counties and among the Irish and German workers along the Miami canal. 98

At Greenville, southeast of Versailles, Father Navarron in late 1839 visited about a dozen Catholic families, who had built a log church that had not yet been blessed and contained no altar. Most of the settlers were French families. In the early 1830s, a number of people left France during the political storms and settled around the Versailles, Frenchtown, and Russia area in 1835. Two decades later the community purchased a United Brethren meetinghouse and was organized into a parish. Under the supervision of Navarron, who had been appointed Purcell's delegate over the large territory from Greenville to Lima, the St. Valbert log church was built three miles northeast of Versailles in 1840. Four years later, every fourth Sunday the congregation of 357 attended Mass and heard sermons in French, and occasionally in English and German as well. As the Catholic communities increased in size, owing largely to the increase of German Catholic emigrants, there was need for more and larger churches. The church at Tiffin, which Purcell visited in June 1841, "is so small," he reported in the Catholic Telegraph, "that not more than one third of the congregation can find place in it. This, indeed, is the case in nearly all the churches of Ohio. We are like a youth that has outgrown its clothes." 99

The increasing number of English-speaking people in Dayton in the 1840s made possible the erection of the first English-speaking church in the city. The cornerstone of the church of St. Joseph was laid on July 11, 1847. The Benevolent Societies, one English, the other German, marched in procession to the new site. Notwithstanding the heat of the day, Protestant ministers of the various denominations attended the ceremony and listened to Purcell's talk that lasted about an hour. It was estimated that more than three thousand people from Cincinnati traveled to Dayton to witness the ceremony. The church was dedicated the following October. German Catholics and their Irish co-religionists also laid the foundation of Catholicism in the neighboring counties. 99

Churches were being built throughout Ohio. By the time of the Civil War eighty-two churches had been built in the present diocese. When the Catholics of Wilmington intended to build St. Columbkille Church in the 1860s, a local newspaper aptly noted that the "well-known promptness and energy of that denomination in church building is a sure guaranty that they will accomplish whatever, in that line, they undertake." At times the mother churches resisted the founding of new parishes. For example, John Hahne,
pastor of Emmanuel Church in Dayton, opposed the formation of Holy Trinity parish. He feared that if St. Mary and Holy Trinity were to become independent parishes Emmanuel would lose many families. During one of the tumultuous meetings Hahne declared that “all those who leave the mother church are going out of heaven.” The parish was nevertheless organized and some of Emmanuel’s parishioners transferred to Holy Trinity.41

ETHNIC ISSUES

The overwhelming majority of the newcomers to the diocese of Cincinnati clung tenaciously to the customs and language of their homelands. The deep commitment of the Germans to the preservation of their language was evident in their strong support of German instruction in both the public and Catholic schools. Separate schools were for the Germans a means of preserving the German language; preserving the German language was a means of preserving their Catholic faith. This interest on the part of the Germans, to maintain their native language, became an issue and a battleground within American Catholicism with those individuals who encouraged full assimilation into American life. Though concerned over the relationship of Catholicism with American society, Purcell did not push for full assimilation. “Here there is work enough for all Catholics of all nations,” he wrote, “to do for their country and religion.”42

Throughout Purcell’s years of leadership, the diocese sought to maintain a balance on linguistic differences. In communities where there were English and German churches, “the language of the instructions,” Purcell wrote, “should be only that spoken by the generality of the congregation,” and that the sacraments “should be administered by English to English, by German to German.” When German Catholics understood English, they had “a right,” if they chose, to attach themselves to English congregations. “But English Catholics who do not understand German,” Purcell argued, “are inexcusable for depriving themselves of the advantage of instruction which they can enjoy only in their own churches.” At times during the course of the nineteenth century there developed feuds between English- and German-speaking Catholics in mixed parishes. Tensions between Irish and German Catholics at St. Brigid parish became apparent in the mid-1850s when the pastor forbade German priests from the Nazareth school, later named the University of Dayton, to minister to the thirty-eight German families and say Mass in the church more than twice a year.43

Overall, Purcell through his diocesan paper acknowledged the positive influence of Germans. “In faith,” the Catholic Telegraph informed its English-language readers, the German and Irish emigrants “are one, [but] in
almost every other disposition of mind they are distinct." In the late 1850s it also pointed out that the Germans generally supported their churches better than the Irish did. "All the German churches of the city," it wrote, "are reducing their debts." It wished it "could say the same of St. Patrick's and St. Thomas." The Catholic Telegraph, likewise, praised the Germans in cultivating large tracts of land throughout the diocese. It attributed the accomplishment of this work to their "patience and frugality." It was "in these qualifications," the diocesan paper continued, "that our Irish brethren are deficient. Their minds are too quick for their hands; they do not seem to understand the only true 'progress' in which a Christian can indulge—the gradual but persevering toil by which day by day, and year by year, a man can build up a home for himself and family." The Irish tended to be poorer than the Germans, worked mostly in remote places on railroads and public works, and were less able than their co-religionists to adjust quickly to urban life."

However, the Irish ordinary did come to the defense of the Irish Catholics. Though generally in favor of American political ideas and practices, Purcell criticized too much Americanization at the expense of certain ethnic traditions. At the same time that the American hierarchy contended with anti-Catholicism, there developed an internal dispute between some American bishops, including Purcell, and Orestes Brownson, a talented and famed lay leader from Boston and convert to Catholicism, on how to deal with the climate of fear and intimidation. Nativism set the stage for a vigorous defense of Catholicism by leaders of American Catholic thought. Two diametrically opposite thinkers on the subject in the 1850s were Archbishop John Hughes and Brownson. Whereas the more conservative Hughes favored a more hierarchically structured church that sought to protect the Catholic people in a frequently hostile environment, Brownson, as editor of his Boston quarterly Brownson Quarterly Review, consistently urged Catholics to become fully part of American life and culture. As an assimilationist, Brownson criticized the Irish Catholic immigrants for failing to distinguish sufficiently between their Catholicity and their being Irish, arguing that their lack of Americanization fanned anti-Catholicism. He told the Irish and other immigrants that they "must ultimately lose their own nationality and become assimilated in general character to the Anglo-American race.""6

Brownson's critics, on the other hand, maintained that his extreme arguments played right into the hands of those anti-Catholics who feared excessive papal rule over American Catholics. Irish-born and native-born bishops were lined up on both sides of the quarrel. Purcell was particularly critical of Brownson's insensitivity toward the Irish. "That man," he wrote to Blanc, "is destined to be our worst enemy in these United States." Though relations between Purcell and Brownson were strained for a while, by the end of the
year they dropped their quarrel, and relations between them improved. By 1857 the diocesan paper, now pleased with “the tone and spirit” of Brownson’s Quarterly Review, expressed the hope that it would be found in the home of every Catholic family.6

Though Purcell criticized Brownson on his Irish insensitivity, the archbishop and the Catholic Telegraph occasionally reprimanded the Irish on their wakes and intemperance. Though the religious hierarchy was generally pleased with the “Sabbath-keeping character” of the Irish, there was concern over the disorderly conduct of the newly arrived immigrants. Even though there were complaints about German drinking and picnics, their communities were more stable. Church authorities disapproved of the “scandalous manner” in which the funerals of a certain portion of the Irish Catholic population were conducted. It condemned the “unchristian” practice of smoking tobacco, drinking whiskey, and “passing round indecent jokes and jests, at the waking of the dead, and not entering the church to pray for the departed . . . , and stopping on the way to and from the graveyard to drink.” Purcell tried to put an end to these disorders. His understanding of ecclesiastical authority necessitated a strong approach to ecclesiastical discipline. The archbishop went so far as to establish a policy that there would never be more than six carriages at a funeral, preferably two or three. He urged all Catholics, with the exception of the family members of the deceased, to stay away from wakes and that the surviving relatives would walk gravely and prayerfully at the funeral. The fact that the diocesan paper often had to remind its readers of the church’s policy suggests that the faithful did not fully adhere to the archbishop’s directive.7

Though less faultfinding of the conduct of the German Catholics than that of the Irish, Purcell was critical of those German-speaking priests unable to understand or speak English. In the 1850s there were several places in the archdiocese where German-speaking priests could barely—if at all—understand English. Visiting Mercer County in the summer of 1852 Purcell observed that “hardly one of the German priests, though so faithful and devoted to those of their own tongue, is capable of hearing a confession in English.” He was hopeful, he wrote in the Catholic Telegraph, that the German priests would master English, “as a powerful means of extending their usefulness to American Catholics and Protestants—for German priests should think not only of preserving but of propagating the faith.” Ideally, thought Purcell, German priests would be able to speak the English language and be sympathetic to American values. Two years later the archdiocese sponsored a separate retreat for about twelve diocesan German priests who could not speak English. Like himself, Purcell wanted European priests to become Americanized.8
At the same time that he expressed concern over German parochialism, Purcell proved sensitive to German finances. Though the archbishop, like many of his fellow bishops, found some of the lay trustees too self-asserting, Purcell dealt with them prudently. His management of financial issues is a good example. As the number of Catholic churches and schools continued to increase, the American bishops tried to find regular means of support. In the early 1850s Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Baltimore suggested to his episcopal colleagues that one-tenth to one-third of the parish revenues be assessed for episcopal support. Though some of Purcell’s suffragan bishops were receptive to it, Purcell thought otherwise. “The Germans, I am quite sure,” he wrote to Kenrick, would “never consent to give a tenth of the revenues of their churches. And in my opinion it ought not to be expected from them, much less exacted.” Although Purcell could have used the additional revenue, he felt there would be “a hue and cry raised against him . . . that would injure Religion and the bishop more than the money could do him good.” Besides, he thought the German congregations should be assessed much less. He took into consideration not only their revenue, but their “indebtedness and liabilities for the support” of their own pastors, schools, and churches.9

Though Purcell overall was “[m]uch pleased” with the accomplishments of the Germans, occasionally on matters of church authority they displeased him. At the beginning of his administration he made reference to “the absurd pretension, especially of stupid & quarrelsome Germans, to elect their pastors like the heretics do.” And at times he had to rebuke formally some German congregations for defying their pastors. Questions of authority and control within the church have been lively throughout American history. Purcell was well aware that one of the most challenging problems the American church faced was lay trusteeship in the German parishes. Throughout the nineteenth century, German lay trustees were actively involved in the decision-making process. Church congregations elected a board of trustees who were responsible for the management and disposition of church property. Many times these lay trustees felt they also had the right to select and dismiss their pastors at will. Unlike in Europe, where in some places lay patronage exercised that power, in the new nation, consistent with popular republicanism, congregations could exercise such authority. Though the local church in the nineteenth century witnessed a gradual shift from a congregational model of the parish to a clerical model, aided by the significant increase of a foreign-born clergy, the shift was slower and less noticeable in the German than in the Irish parishes. The latter generally accepted the hierarchical concept of the church.59

Though the uproar over trusteeship was largely in the East, Cincinnati was also touched by it. Cincinnati Catholics largely escaped the feuds
between German trustees and the local bishop in such cities as New York, Philadelphia, Buffalo, and Cleveland. Instead of trustees or wardens owning parish property in the diocese of Cincinnati, Purcell did. This was consistent with the precedent set by Bishop Fenwick in the transference of the legal title to Christ Church in 1825 and the decrees passed by the first provincial council of Baltimore in 1829. The bishops had legislated against the laity holding titles to ecclesiastical properties. When forming a parish any land or buildings acquired were deeded to the bishop. His approval was also needed for any future construction. Though Purcell owned the property, its care was entrusted to the trustees. But not all German Catholics in the see city were pleased with the arrangement. In the early 1840s the diocese witnessed a battle between some German parishioners and Purcell over who should hold title to church property. In 1842 Bishop Purcell had purchased slightly more than nineteen acres of land in Price Hill for St. Joseph cemetery for all Catholics. In January 1843 Edward Purcell deeded one-half of the tract to a corporation directed by German laymen, the German Catholic Cemetery Association. The association then bought property in Fairmount, where St. Peter cemetery was established. In 1853 the archbishop bought more than sixty-one acres of land in Price Hill in the western portion of the city and consecrated most of it for cemetery purposes in August 1854, also calling it St. Joseph cemetery. In 1880 the two St. Joseph cemeteries, the old and the new, became incorporated as the St. Joseph Cemetery Association.\textsuperscript{51}

Shortly after his return from Europe in 1843, Purcell encountered opposition to diocesan control over church properties from some of the trustees of St. Mary parish and of the German Catholic Cemetery Association of Cincinnati. This faction favored lay control of parochial fiscal concerns. Attempting to assert their independence from the bishop, the association secured more than sixteen hundred signatures and petitioned the state legislature for incorporation, changing its name in December 1843 to the German Catholic Congregation of Cincinnati. The following month about two thousand German Catholics met in St. Mary Church to protest the effort at lay incorporation. At this meeting, which according to the Wahrheitsfreund was “the largest that had ever been held by German Catholics in the West,” strong presentations were given by Henni, at the time bishop-elect of Milwaukee, and other loyal German clergy. They successfully drew up resolutions condemning the efforts for independent incorporation, which Henni described as “highly unorthodox.” The impending plans of the trustee group never materialized.\textsuperscript{52}

In the February 1, 1844, issue of the Wahrheitsfreund an article appeared urging that the administration of the temporalities could be handled by a committee of lay people, but deeds for church property should continue to be held by the bishop. A few months later the Catholic Telegraph clearly
expressed the diocese's position on the relationship of the Catholic Church and the authority of its people. "The line is broad and clearly marked where her power commences and the obedience of the people begins," the diocesan paper editorialized. "Every property of a religious character may be held in trust by the Laity, but the church MUST BE FREE. We will allow no encroachments on them. The INCOME of those churches is in the hands of the people; they see how the money is disposed of, that not one penny of it never [sic] comes into the hands of the Bishop; they have the administration of the affairs and the disposal of the money, but here they must stop."  

For some time Purcell had been concerned over the existing method of holding property in the name of the bishop. All property in the diocese except that of religious orders was held in his name. Purcell feared liability for parish debts. "I am frightened," he wrote to Bishop Hughes in 1840, "at the idea of 80 & 40's of acres, not to say 1000's, in my own name." In preparation for the upcoming Fourth Provincial Council of Baltimore that year, he proposed that the hierarchy discuss the issue of property. "Can anything be done," he wrote to Archbishop Eccleston, "to exonerate bishops from the care of Church property & the risk of loss if forced to pay debts contracted by clergymen, whom the law may look upon as their agents and by whose acts they are consequently bound?"  

At the same time that Purcell was engaged in the dispute with some of the trustees of the German Catholic Cemetery Association, some German Catholics in the United States complained that they were not receiving their proportionate share of contributions made by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith to the American hierarchy. In early 1844 the Society sent a circular to the American bishops, relaying the charges. Because of these complaints the Society now found it necessary to specify some of its allocations toward German projects. It sent 10,000 francs ($2,000) to Purcell for St. Mary's. Purcell, who did not want to jeopardize any assistance in the future, understood the delicate position that the Society found itself in. Upset over the accusations, Purcell responded angrily, yet cautiously, to the circular the same day that he received it. Two days later, still fuming over the complaints, he wrote a second letter to the French Society, stoutly defending the American hierarchy as the "most zealous, disinterested, [and] devoted" that he knew. On the eve of the Provincial Council of 1846, Purcell recommended to Archbishop Eccleston that he write "a strong" pastoral on "Church Authority & the obedience due to it, . . . to check the growing licentiousness of some perverse minds & enlighten the ignorant in danger of seduction by their bad example and persuasion."  

By the end of the decade he was again embroiled in controversy with the trustees of the St. Peter's Cemetery Association. The trustees defied the
bishop’s instruction to disallow the burial of persons not in communion with the church. On September 9, 1848, Purcell placed the St. Peter cemetery under interdict, which prohibited Cincinnati Catholics loyal to the church’s authority from burying their dead in the cemetery thereafter. That day the ordinary’s decree was read from all the pulpits of all the city’s German parishes. Most German Catholics complied with the bishop’s order. The dispute with the trustees continued for the next few years, forcing Purcell, as he put it to Blanc, to speak against this “small band of radical Germans, miscalled Catholics.”

Notwithstanding the few conflicts between German trustees and Purcell, overall relations between the Cincinnati ordinary and German Catholics were positive. In addition to allowing the creation of national parishes and the establishment of three more German cemeteries during the remainder of his term, Purcell helped foster an environment that was conducive to greater parish autonomy and lay powers among German Catholics.