From the 1830s to the 1870s Catholics under Purcell’s leadership expanded their charitable and educational programs for the needy, largely made possible by the pioneer efforts of women and men religious orders and benevolent lay societies. Though childcare in the archdiocese, as in other urban dioceses, still dominated Catholic priorities in the second half of the nineteenth century, other areas increasingly attracted concern. Moreover, through Purcell’s leadership the local church took an unequivocal stand on the abolition of slavery, opposed secession by the South, and was consistently loyal to the Union during the Civil War. While the Cincinnati ordinary’s stature among his episcopal colleagues increased in the nineteenth century, his episcopal authority in the archdiocese also grew. By midcentury Purcell, who presided successfully over a vast spiritual empire, also began building a new seminary, hoping to provide more American and diocesan clergy. Two decades later the dean of the American bishops suffered a devastating blow. Because of erratic banking practices by his brother, Edward Purcell, the archdiocese faced a severe financial crisis.¹

CHARITABLE PROGRAMS AND TEMPERANCE

In the early years of Purcell’s administration the diocese’s social work programs focused on schools and orphanages. By the 1850s the archdiocese began developing new social programs. The economic depressions of 1854 and 1857 and the continuing influx of immigrants called for more organized charities. Furthermore, the six archbishops and twenty-six bishops who met in 1852 for the First Plenary Council of Baltimore had affirmed in their pastoral letter
the increasing need to “found Hospitals, establish orphanages and provide for every want of suffering humanity, which Religion forbids us to neglect.” The Catholic poor in the archdiocese populated the city’s poverty zones in far greater proportions than the general population. When in 1855 the Cincinnati Relief Union informed the archbishop that three-fourths of the individuals on their relief rolls were “poor Irish people,” they inquired what the Catholic Church was doing for its needy. Purcell responded by pointing out that the local church supported four orphan asylums and spent about $10,000 annually “on the poor members of her communion, and of others not of her communion,” including twenty of eighty-six children in St. Peter’s Orphanage.2

To help support charitable causes members of the St. Peter’s, St. Joseph’s, and St. Aloysius’s male and female orphan societies paid twenty-five cents per month to support charitable causes. Those of the Mary and Martha Society, a charitable organization established in 1836 for the benefit of the poor, the sick, and the elderly, paid twelve and one-half cents per month. Money was also raised by fairs for the benefit of the orphans and by collections taken up in the churches and by fairs, balls, and concerts. As in other dioceses, local benevolent societies often turned to crowd-pleasing social events to raise money. While officially ordinaries presided over all the charitable enterpris- es in their dioceses, responsibility for the administration of financial success rested primarily on the voluntary efforts of the lay members.1

Moreover, in the early 1840s the Sisters of Notre Dame established sodalities under the patronage of the Blessed Mother. The lay women at these sodalities, which met at the Sixth Street convent, worked among the poor and orphans in their own parishes. In the German parishes a committee of two in each city ward investigated the claims of applicants and drew upon their parish treasury for such sums as were required to help the needy. These efforts by the laity constituted the beginning of the Catholic lay ministry in the diocese of Cincinnati.1

Purcell’s commitment to the needs of the sick and the poor was equally well respected. Throughout his tenure he “always found an hour or two to visit the sick,” William Bigot, pastor of St. Michael Church at Fort Loramie wrote in 1873, “and devote some time to the poor. His bishop’s ring was pawned many times to get money to be used for the needy. Some found out about it and got it back for him.”5

In particular, the Cincinnati ordinary was concerned over the living and working conditions of the Catholic poor. In Purcell’s judgment, intemperance, low wages, and general economic conditions contributed to their plight. In the early years of his tenure the local church addressed the issue of alcoholism. It was the most enduring reform movement that local Catholics became identified with in the nineteenth century. The temperance crusade
continued into the early twentieth century. By 1840 Bishop Purcell, along with a few other bishops, supported the cause. In March of that year the Catholic Total Abstinence Society of Cincinnati was formed, with Edward Collins, the Irish vicar general for the English-speaking Catholics, as president. About two weeks later Purcell joined seventy-seven members of the cathedral parish in taking the pledge. Though Purcell was generally abstemious, he had an occasional drink. When the Jesuits arrived in Cincinnati in early September, Purcell invited them to his house where he served, he wrote, “red & white wine, in spite of Teetotalism.” He and the diocesan paper criticized the American Temperance Union for its advocacy of prohibition. In the 1840s and 1850s more and more parish communities sponsored local temperance societies. Throughout his administration Purcell saw the Catholic temperance movement as essential. In 1874 the seventy-four-year-old archbishop addressed the Catholic Total Abstinence Union that convened in Philadelphia. “Having enjoyed, thank God, very fine health for the ten years when I was totally abstinent . . .,” he said, “now I can, though a teetotaller once more, work with as little inconvenience as ever.” He was pleasantly surprised that his health did not suffer from abstinence.

While supporting the Catholic Total Abstinence movement, Purcell made it exclusively a Catholic crusade. When invited to preach a temperance sermon in two Methodist churches in the early 1840s, he declined. He had no objections, however, to the participation of the Catholic Total Abstinence Society in local temperance parades, regarding them as purely civic in nature. Though fully committed to the cause, Purcell stopped short of attempting to force the German and French Catholics, who generally did not endorse the abstinence movement, to take the pledge. Instead, Purcell and his clergy focused on the Irish poor. They were generally more hospitable to the temperance cause. While visiting the public works at St. Mary’s Lake on the Miami Canal in the fall of 1850, he described it as “the Irish laborers’ graveyard in Ohio.” Only “they who have lived among the ‘shanties,’” he further noted, “can conceive the hardships there endured by a people whom oppression had driven from their own healthy homes to seek an honest livelihood where the very air is darkened with the shafts of the pestilence! Alas for poor, human nature, when this evil is frightfully aggravated by intemperance madly resorted to as a refuge from disease!” Aware that some canal workers were served as many as seventeen glasses of hard liquor a day, Purcell derived pleasure to see people come forward to take the pledge. Their experience of the “evils of intemperance convinced them,” he wrote, “that they could not otherwise avoid the miseries of this life.”

Like most of his episcopal colleagues, however, Purcell did not consider the pledge as binding under pain of sin. One of the more ardent pastors who
ministered to the workers on the Erie Canal was Emanuel Thienpont, past-
tor of Emmanuel Church at Dayton. On one of his visits to the canal near
Piqua, seventeen workers took the pledge. Though many of the bishop’s
clergy crusaded for the cause, not all of them were strong temperance men
from the start. Father Joseph Machebeuf, who took care of several counties
in northwestern Ohio, admitted to Purcell that, not unlike other priests he
knew, he was not at first a friend of total abstinence. But he eventually felt
compelled to abstain. On St. Patrick’s Day, 1842, he took the pledge.4

Besides participating in the temperance movement, local Catholics also
addressed a number of social issues. When in the summer of 1849 Cincinnati
experienced another cholera epidemic, the worst since 1832–1833 when Bish-
op Fenwick succumbed to the disease, the local church expressed particular
concern over the plight of the Catholic poor. In a nine-day period, June 18 to
June 26, 398 of 505 burials in Cincinnati were victims of cholera. In his July
2, 1849, pastoral letter to the diocese, Purcell estimated that more than sev-
enty Catholics a day died of it. He attributed the high rate of Catholic deaths
to the fact that the Catholics were among the poorest in the city. They “must
put up,” he said, “with the damp cellar, the ill-ventilated garret, the loath-
some alley, . . . the wet, unchanged garments after toil and rain.” As the
supreme pastor of the diocese Purcell reminded the faithful that the innocent
must suffer with the guilty in the face of God’s wrath. He pointed out that
the cholera was also due to the “crimes of intemperance, profane swearing,
desecration of the Sabbath, contempt of religion, dishonesty, and oppression
and insensibility to the wants of the poor.”5

As before, the Sisters of Charity responded heroically to the cholera epi-
demic. While the sisters attended to the sick and provided rooms at St.
Peter’s Orphanage to a large number of new destitute orphans, Purcell urged
Catholics to be as generous toward the facilities as possible. “We are all very
much exhausted by fatigue and anxiety of mind,” Purcell wrote. “Fourteen
of our little orphan girls have died and some others may follow owing to the
inherited weakness of their little frames.” Some German Catholic families
responded by renting a house to accommodate additional children.6

Purcell concluded his July 1849 pastoral on the cholera epidemic on an
uncharacteristic note, in which he suggested substantial social reforms.
Believing that Americans had the capacity to effect reforms in society to
improve living conditions, he recommended that “the filthy and disgusting
hovels where the penniless are compelled to congregate . . . be reduced to
ashes and grounds.” Purcell hoped that community funds would be allocat-
ed “to build up whole streets of comfortable cottages, or houses, in sufficient
number for all who may require them! This good thing can be done.” What
was needed, he argued, was “a ‘Creating Spirit,’ a hearty good will on the
part of our citizens to realize this moral and physical phenomenon for which no city, or nation, hath a parallel."

A year earlier Purcell had recommended that a "prudent, legal, thorough reform of the Social System" be implemented to give a "... sufficient share to every man of the good things of this life." He blamed "the lazy, the vicious, the dishonest, the unprincipled usurpers of the hard earnings of the virtuous poor" for much of the social malaise. Purcell also warned his flock that the "bursting storms" in Europe in 1848 were such that they and other Americans should not "let the evils of society become so aggravated by ... neglect and indifference as to require such a terrific explosion. ... Let us save, if possible," he continued, "our country from the calamities of the old world. Better do this while it is yet time. Better vaccinate society, than let it take the small pox."

Though the local church expressed concern over social ills, it frowned upon direct government assistance. While criticizing those individuals who made a profit by raising fuel prices due to a shortage during the economic depression of 1857, Purcell and the diocesan paper emphasized more the importance of self-help. "The Spirit that is evidently growing in our large cities of looking to government for bread in hunger, or for employment in idleness," the Catholic Telegraph editorialized, "seems to bode the decay of the republican sentiment among our people. ... In a true republic the people take care of themselves, and ask nothing but justice from the law, and the moment government becomes the father of the people, republicanism is effete."!

RELIGIOUS ORDERS, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

Under the auspices of various women religious communities, Catholic social work expanded in the diocese during the Purcell years. By midcentury American women religious were among the strongest advocates for health, education, and social service institutions. The local ordinary, like his episcopal colleagues, praised their efforts and constantly encouraged them to expand their works and attend to the people who need them. As they did, it was nevertheless through their schools that the greatest number of people came into contact with the women religious. Notwithstanding the earlier anti-Catholic warnings of some Protestants, by midcentury some wealthy Protestants contributed to financing the Catholic schools and sent their children to them. Writing about the work of the women religious, Purcell noted that the "Protestants are forced to acknowledge the solidity of instruction given by these ladies. Consequently, a goodly number of them have confided to them their children."
To accommodate the increasing numbers of children under their care, by 1850 the Sisters of Charity from Emmitsburg, who had moved their academy, school, and orphanage to Third and Plum Streets in 1836, had made three additions to the building. At that time there were more than three hundred children in St. Peter’s, about half each in the school and the orphanage. In 1850 the superiors of the Sisters of Charity at Emmitsburg affiliated with the Daughters of Charity in France. Two years later five of the eight sisters in Cincinnati under the leadership of their superior, Margaret Cecilia Farrell George, one of the original founders of the American Sisters of Charity and friend of the founder Elizabeth Seton, declined affiliation. Like their sister counterparts in New York, who had already withdrawn from the Emmitsburg community to form their own separate community, they disapproved of the changes in dress, customs, rules, vows, and the limitation of the exercise of charity to females in the orphanages and parochial schools.15

Having witnessed the work and spread of the order in his diocese, the archbishop eventually supported Sister Margaret and those sisters who wished to retain the initial dress, rules, and regulations, which were more symbolic of American customs and practices. Purcell, like some of his episcopal colleagues, sought to promote religious communities that would attend to local needs without needing approval from authorities outside the diocese. In February 1852, after saying Mass for the Sisters of Charity in their chapel, Purcell declared that his “Brother ecclesiastics” and he had decided that the sisters should remain Mother Seton’s Daughters of Charity. “I shall establish here in my Episcopal City a Motherhouse and open a Novitiate for training the young,” he said. The following month, the five sisters, joined by Sister Sophia Gillmeyer, a native of Maryland who had stayed in Cincinnati after a visit two years earlier, disestablished their connection with the community at Emmitsburg. They made their vows to Purcell and became an independent diocesan community. Another sister from St. Louis soon joined them.16

The seven sisters became the founding members of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. The ordeal was not an easy one for them, as they had to decide between loyalty to the community at Emmitsburg and the needs of the American community and the local church. A year after the break, Sister Margaret George was elected the first mother superior of the community. St. Peter’s academy, orphan asylum, and school served as the first motherhouse until 1853, when a two-story building was renovated on Mount Harrison in Price Hill. There they opened Mount St. Vincent Academy and boarding school the same year. In addition to the founding of St. Xavier College and the church schools established in the various parishes, the archdiocese also saw during the next thirty years of Purcell’s tenure an increase in female academies. The Sisters of Charity, soon to be joined by other women religious
orders, regarded the moral and religious training of the girls as future mothers as essential to sustain the sanctity of the home. This was a view widespread generally in American society during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries.

In 1857 the Sisters of Charity acquired thirty-three acres on Glenway Avenue, where the motherhouse and Mount St. Vincent Academy were relocated. This area became the center of community activities for the next twenty years. As the number of students and novices increased and the academy became overcrowded, the Sisters of Charity in 1869 acquired Biggs Farms in Delhi, on the outskirts of the city. When new buildings were erected across the road from the farmhouse in 1884, the sisters' motherhouse was moved there. The farm became known as the Mount St. Joseph. The sisters used the farmhouse as a novitiate, the place of training for those who were preparing to enter the order.

Following the diocesan organization of the Sisters of Charity and the addition of more personnel to their community, the ministry of the sisters expanded rapidly. The order was the most important of the religious orders in the archdiocese with regard to charity and social service. The same month that they became an independent diocesan community, local lay Catholics organized St. Joseph's Benevolent Society to help support an orphanage for
boys. Two months later they opened St. Joseph Orphanage on George Street, with Sister Anthony O'Connell in charge of the 23 boys. In the fall of 1852 the archdiocese acquired nearly twelve acres of land in Cumminsville at a cost of $8,000 for the purpose of building a new orphanage. Two summers later the sisters and 160 orphan boys moved to their new site. The following year the girls from St. Peter Orphanage were also transferred to Cumminsville. On the eve of the Civil War, St. Joseph Orphanage took care of 400 children.19

In February 1853 two Sisters of Charity also took charge of the Mary and Martha Society. Later that year the Sisters of Charity opened St. Mary Academy, a select boarding and day school, on the southeast corner of Sixth and Park Streets. Two years later the school was closed in order to open pay and free schools on George Street. Not uncommon among most women religious communities in the pre–Civil War period was for a free school to be conducted side by side with the select school. The select or "pay school" often provided the funds that made possible the free school.20

In the fall of 1852 Purcell helped expand the ministry of the Sisters of Charity by purchasing a hotel for invalids in Cincinnati and giving it to them. On November 13 the sisters opened the first private hospital, St. John's Hotel for Invalids, on Broadway and Franklin Streets in the east end of the city. Increasing immigration and periodic epidemics pointed to the need for Catholic hospitals. Providing care for twenty-one patients, St. John's, which was one among approximately twenty-five Catholic hospitals opened in the country by 1860, was also the first such Catholic hospital in the community to have a teaching faculty associated with it. Three years later the sisters moved the hospital to the property vacated by the girl orphans at Third and Plum in the west end. In 1866 two generous non-Catholic benefactors, Joseph Butler and Louis Worthington, bought the U.S. Marine Hospital at Sixth Street for the Sisters of Charity. They handed over the deed of the property on the fiftieth birthday of Sister Anthony, who had joined the staff of St. John's and was often referred to as the "Florence Nightingale of America." The donors requested that the name of the hospital be changed to the "Hospital of the Good Samaritan" in remembrance of Sister Anthony's kindness. That year the sisters abandoned St. John's and opened Good Samaritan Hospital. The latter, with a ninety-five-bed capacity, remained there until 1915, when it was moved to Clifton Avenue, northeast of the city. In the fall of 1873 the Sisters of Charity also founded in the east end the St. Joseph Infant Asylum, later known as the St. Joseph Infant and Maternity Home, as a branch of Good Samaritan Hospital. The property was another gift to Sister Anthony from her friend Joseph Butler. As one of twelve Catholic infant homes and maternity hospitals opened in the United States between 1870 and 1900, St. Joseph cared for expectant, unwed mothers and their babies.21
Besides the expansion of the Sisters of Charity’s social ministry, by the late 1850s more parochial schools in the archdiocese came under their guidance. In 1857 the order took charge of St. Mary Academy connected to St. Joseph Church in Dayton. This was the Cincinnati order’s first institution outside Cincinnati. Two years later they staffed St. Patrick school in Fayetteville. Over time other cities in the East and West invited the Cincinnati sisters to establish a branch of Mother Seton’s community. By 1870 there were more than 180 Sisters of Charity, staffing seventeen parochial schools in Ohio alone.  

In the nineteenth century other women religious came to the diocese and helped enhance the social and educational work of the local church. It was Purcell’s understanding after he returned from Europe in 1839 that the superior of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart would soon be sending him sisters for his diocese. He was doubtlessly disappointed to learn that new regulations in the order had forced the superior to postpone indefinitely sending any sisters to Cincinnati. Purcell then immediately appealed to the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Belgium. Though the sisters appeared willing to come to the diocese, they would do so only if certain conditions were met. They requested financial assistance, a suitable house with a garden, and the opportunity to conduct classes for poor children. Though unable to meet the first two conditions, Purcell assured them that they could choose a proper location at Cincinnati, Fayetteville, or Chillicothe, and conduct parochial schools for poor children. The sisters accepted the bishop’s invitation.

On October 31, 1840, eight sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, with Sister Louise de Gonzaga as local superior, arrived in Cincinnati. Purcell went to the river and personally greeted them on the steamer. Not wanting to be insulted and ridiculed, the French-speaking sisters were not wearing their religious habits because they had chosen to be inconspicuous on the journey. This was an age when, in some circles, women religious who, unlike their Protestant contemporaries, wore distinctive clothing, took lifelong vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and subjected themselves to regulations governing every aspect of their lives, were considered suspect. During the next six weeks the Notre Dame Sisters stayed with the Sisters of Charity. Though Purcell offered them two hundred acres of land in Brown County, Sister Gonzaga declined the offer, preferring to stay in the city in order to comply with the established customs of the religious community and attend to the education of the poor children. By late fall the sisters purchased a thirty-room mansion on Sixth Street for $24,000 and occupied it Christmas day. Immediately they began preparing the property for a select school for girls. This decision was well received by Purcell, who had wanted a boarding school in the diocese to compete with Nazareth Academy in Kentucky where many Cincinnati girls were being sent. On January 19, 1841, the Sisters of
Notre Dame opened the Young Ladies Literary Institute and Boarding School, later known as Notre Dame Academy. Classes for those students unable to pay the tuition were opened at the same time as the boarding school. A month after its opening there were thirty pupils in the day school, between thirty and forty in the free school, and one boarder. By summer the Sisters of Notre Dame had five boarders, about sixty day pupils, and the same number of poor.\textsuperscript{24}

Catholics were “mightily pleased,” the Catholic Telegraph editorialized in 1841, with the Sisters of Notre Dame that “grace our Queenly City.” When in 1845 the old cathedral on Sycamore Street became the Jesuit Church of St. Francis Xavier, the children of the parish enrolled in the sisters’ free school. The children were accommodated in the convent classrooms and taught gratuitously by the sisters, until the Jesuits erected two decades later the St. Xavier parochial school. In 1846 the Sisters of Notre Dame erected their first school building adjoining their residence on Sixth Street. But that soon proved insufficient. To accommodate the 125 boarders and day students and the six additional sisters and postulants from Europe, a two-story building, containing a refectory, schoolroom for the boarders, a dormitory, and music rooms, was built. With the arrival of German-speaking Sisters of Notre Dame from Belgium, the order then undertook the task of teaching girls in the German parish schools. Shortly after the Civil War, the sisters opened an academy at Court and Mound Streets for young girls in the western parts of Cincinnati. It became the cherished alma mater of hundreds of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish women. This academy remained open until 1920.\textsuperscript{25}

By midcentury the Sisters of Notre Dame extended their ministry outside Cincinnati. In the fall of 1849 four sisters went by canal boat to Dayton and laid the foundation of the second oldest house of the sisterhood in the country. The following year they opened a free school and a boarding school. For the next several decades the sisters in Dayton devoted their time to the parish schools. It was not long before they had flourishing academies and parochial schools at Reading, Hamilton, and Columbus in the Midwest and cities in the East. Pupils and postulants multiplied rapidly. The order’s plan of having a boarding school, a day school, and a free school taught simultaneously, wherever possible, was followed from the beginning.\textsuperscript{26}

Another boost to the educational efforts of the dioce was the arrival of the Ursuline Sisters in 1845. Bishop Purcell had first established relations with the Ursulines on his trip to Europe in 1838 when he visited their convent in France. When in 1844 Father Joseph Machebeuf received word that his father had died in France, he obtained permission to visit his family. Acting as Purcell’s agent, Machebeuf was successful in obtaining from the mother superiors at both Boulogne-sur-Mer and Beaulieu, France, the services of
eleven Ursuline Sisters. Three were English-speaking sisters and eight French-speaking. They left Le Havre in May 1845, arriving in Cincinnati on June 19. 27

Though Purcell offered them a choice in location between Brown County and Chillicothe for their new academy and convent, the Ursulines left the selection to him. Purcell chose Brown County. For over a decade more and more Catholics had moved from the city and settled in the county. The Catholic settlement in Fayetteville was one of the largest in Ohio. The diocesan paper encouraged such movement, pointing out that “the country is a thousand times preferable to the city for the laboring Catholic population. . . . The country is better for soul and body than the crowded cities; there is more peace of mind and tranquility to be there enjoyed.” Shortly after the Ursuline Sisters took possession of the St. Martin’s Convent, located in the vacant seminary quarters in Brown County, they opened an academy where, on October 4, 1845, they received three boarding pupils. The following year they established “The St. Ursula Literary Institute,” and by September 1847 a new convent was built. 28

By midcentury several religious orders ran schools for girls in the archdiocese. The Ursulines conducted the boarding and day school at St. Martin’s and the Sisters of St. Dominic the boarding and day school at Somerset. Meanwhile, the Sisters of the Precious Blood operated the German schools at Wolfs creek settlement in Crawford County, St. Michael’s in Seneca County, St. Alphonso in Huron County, and a girls’ boarding school at Minster. At all these schools for girls, those who could not pay, those who could pay a little, and those who had ample means were “equally suited.” 29

Regrettably, the Catholic Telegraph wrote, “similar advantages are not afforded to the boys. In this respect our German brethren, at least, in this city, are far ahead of us.” Purcell and his staff were hopeful that the opening in the late 1840s of the St. Francis Xavier and cathedral parish schools for English-speaking boys would provide “equal, if not superior advantages.” 30

In the spring of 1849 the pastor of Holy Trinity Church, through his Jesuit missionary friend, Francis X. Weninger, invited the Brothers of the Society of Mary, founded in 1817 at Bordeaux, France, to come to Cincinnati and conduct a school for boys at the Holy Trinity parish. The Society accepted the invitation and sent Father Leo Meyer and Brother Charles Schultz to the diocese. When they reached Cincinnati in mid-July there was a cholera epidemic raging in the Midwest. Purcell asked Meyer to assist temporarily Father Henry Juncker in Dayton, then a community of 16,000 inhabitants. For a month the forty-nine-year-old Meyer aided the sick and dying in all parts of the city. While there he met John Stuart, a parishioner at Emmanuel Church, who owned 125 acres of land southeast of Dayton.
Given the opportunity to buy the estate, Meyer related the offer to the superior general in France.\textsuperscript{39}

When Meyer returned to Cincinnati in mid-August, Purcell gave him and the order the opportunity to open schools anywhere in the diocese. Though Purcell tried to get the Brothers of the Society of Mary to provide teachers for the English-speaking schools, Meyer worked with the pastors of the German-speaking parishes of Holy Trinity and St. Paul. On December 3, four Brothers from Alsace arrived in Cincinnati; two were stationed at Holy Trinity school, whereas the other two were reserved for the foundation that Meyer was planning for Dayton. In February 1850, following the departure of Juncker for Europe, Purcell placed Meyer in charge of Emmanuel Church, the mother church of the city. Like his predecessor, Meyer impressed upon the German Catholics the close link between religion and language. By late March the Marianists purchased the Stuart estate for $12,000 with a six percent annual interest. Meyer intended to make the property, later christened "Nazareth," the headquarters for the Brothers of Mary in America. On September 1, 1850, Meyer and three Brothers of the Society of Mary opened St. Mary’s School, a boarding school for Catholic boys, with fourteen in attendance. Three years later the school had an enrollment of fifty students, among them twenty boarders.\textsuperscript{32}

On the evening of December 26, 1855, tragedy struck the school. A fire destroyed the central house, including the dormitory, classrooms, and several rooms of the Marianists. Temporary quarters were provided the students. Within three months the Brothers of the Society of Mary were back on the school grounds and began the work of rebuilding. School buildings were ready for classes by September 1857. Among the twenty students who attended the school, nine were boarders. Before the end of the school year, there were thirty students. In 1857 the school became known as St. Mary's College, which later became the University of Dayton. Like St. Xavier College in Cincinnati, the second college in the diocese of Cincinnati opened as a day and boarding school. During the next two decades the college continued to grow and several new buildings were added to the Dayton property. The additions included a three-story building in 1860, new wing in 1865, chapel in 1868, and St. Mary’s Hall in 1871.\textsuperscript{33}

At Purcell’s request the Brothers of the Poor of St. Francis, founded in 1857 at Cologne, Germany, and dedicated to the care of orphans and the education of youth of the poorer classes, came to Cincinnati in 1868. Five brothers opened the protectory for homeless and wayward boys in the abandoned St. John’s Hospital on Lock Street. "If all their efforts tend to prevent one mortal sin," Purcell wrote, "all their labors and sacrifices shall have been fully compensated." In its first year the home cared for more than 130 boys.
As the problem of providing sufficient food for the increasing number of boys became more acute, Father Richard Broering of Holy Trinity Church conceived the idea of establishing the St. Margaret Society. By 1870 several parishes established branches of the ladies' aid society in order to help provide food and clothing for the young boys. In one instance the Society sponsored a three-day social and raised $6,000 for the protectorily. In need of larger accommodations, Purcell donated $10,000 as a down payment and the brothers, in 1870, obtained and moved to a farm of more than 100 acres at Mount St. Peter in Delhi Township. When Purcell visited the facilities and said Mass at the family mansion he renamed the site Mount Alverno. At times as many as 250 boys were in the Mount Alverno Protectorily for Boys.  

During Purcell's tenure Mrs. Sarah Worthington King Peter helped arrange for other orders of sisters from Europe to come to Cincinnati to help expand organized Catholic educational and social work in the archdiocese. Daughter of Thomas Worthington, one of Ohio's first senators and governors, Sarah married Rufus King, who died in 1836. Eight years later she married William Peter, British Consul at Philadelphia. After his death in 1853 she traveled extensively. Fascinated by the Christian traditions and shrines of Jerusalem and Rome, Sarah Peter eventually converted to Catholicism and began a long career of service not only to the Catholic Church but also to the arts in Cincinnati.

The first order of sisters that Sarah Peter, with Purcell's approval, helped bring to Cincinnati to do social work was the Good Shepherd Sisters from Louisville. Upon arrival in Cincinnati in February 1857, the sisters took possession of a little frame house adjoining St. Augustine Church in the west end. Sarah Peter brought them eighteen female prisoners for the opening of their class. Taking charge of the Women's Prison on Front Street in the early 1860s, the sisters took care of more than 3,000 "poor prisoners" over a six-year period. A few years later they established a new convent on Baum Street, in the eastern section of the city. In 1866 the Good Shepherd Sisters also opened an industrial school and a day asylum for the children of working mothers. They soon outgrew their facilities. By 1870 the white-robed sisters bought a farm at Carthage, where they established their provincial headquarters and school for girls as well as two industrial schools, one for whites and the other for blacks. Some of the older women prisoners followed the sisters from Front Street and spent the rest of their lives in the Magdalen Retreat of the Good Shepherd institution at Carthage. The ministry of the Good Shepherd Sisters proved controversial as they often worked with delinquent girls and reformed prostitutes. The community of "Magdalens," established in 1859, provided a regular, religious life for penitent, reformed women, who wished to remain forever cloistered. They followed the rule of
the Third Order of Mount Carmel and wore brown habits similar to the Carmelite habit. Their chief occupations were fine needlework, embroidery, and sewing altar linens and church vestments.35

The same year that Sarah Peter helped Purcell obtain the Good Shepherd Sisters, she went to Ireland to procure the Sisters of Mercy to also engage in social work. To help obtain them Purcell assured the sisters that they would never be without food as long as he had “a crust” of bread to share with them. More than two decades after Mother Catherine MacAuley founded the order in Ireland in 1831, eleven Sisters of Mercy, with Mother Mary Teresa Maher as the superior, arrived in Cincinnati on August 18, 1858. Sarah Peter provided temporary residence for them at her home. The sisters, who trained nurses and social workers as well as teachers, immediately engaged themselves in numerous social work activities. Consistent with the mission of their society, they instructed young girls in the useful branches of education, took care of the very young children of working mothers, visited the jails and hospitals, and provided temporary accommodation to distressed, unemployed women. In October they opened a night school in the basement of St. Thomas Church on Sycamore Street for uneducated adult Irish immigrants. The following day they opened the Infant Boys’ School in the same quarters. Within a month approximately two hundred working girls attended night school, eighty infant boys were registered in the day school, and the sisters paid some 360 visits to the sick, destitute, and dying in the neighborhood.36

In the spring of 1860 the Sisters of Mercy, with Purcell’s approval, purchased and moved to the former German orphanage on Fourth Street for their future convent and schools. They paid $6,000 from the proceeds of a fair and picnic and mortgaged the property for the remaining $23,000. There they cared for needy children and homeless women and opened a laundry to enable the women to earn a livelihood. They also conducted married women’s classes, a day school of nearly two hundred students, and a Sunday school.37

By September the sisters opened a new school for girls on Third Street, which was readily reached from their convent by a flight of outdoor stairs. Though the Third Street property was to serve largely as a house of refuge and academy, it also served as a hospital during the Civil War, the cholera epidemic of 1866, and the flood of 1883. By the 1870s the Sisters of Mercy, who would become the largest female religious community in the world, had expanded their work to schools not only in Cincinnati but also to other communities in Ohio.38

While visiting the Sisters of Mercy in Europe in 1857, Sarah Peter was also successful in getting a delegation of Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis in Germany to work with the poor, the aged, and the sick in their home. On September 7, 1858, five sisters and a postulant arrived in New York, where
they were greeted at the wharf and escorted to Cincinnati by the archbishop's brother and chancellor, Edward Purcell. Thus within a month's time Sarah Peter had managed to secure two orders of sisters, one Irish—Sisters of Mercy, who had arrived in August—and one German. After the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor stayed a few days in a temporary home in Cincinnati, three trustees of the St. Aloysius Orphan Society offered the use, rent free for six months, of the building that had served as St. Aloysius' Orphanage on West Fourth Street. The sisters' first establishment was the old orphanage on Third Street that was remodeled for that purpose. On Christmas day 1859 they opened the city's second Catholic hospital, St. Mary's, on Betts Street in the west end of the city in a predominantly German neighborhood. Early in 1860 Sarah Peter put them up, as she had the Sisters of Mercy, in her own house. A short time later she deeded over to them half her property, which then became a convent, as did the other half upon her death. In 1878 some sisters went to Dayton at the request of John F. Hahne, pastor of the Emmanuel Church, and founded St. Elizabeth Hospital, the third Catholic hospital in the archdiocese. Ten years later, because of the overcrowded condition of St. Mary's in Cincinnati, the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis also established St. Francis Hospital on Queen City Avenue in the west end.\footnote{9}

The fourth order of sisters invited to the archdiocese by Sarah Peter was the Little Sisters of the Poor. She induced some of the sisters to leave their motherhouse in Brittany, France, in 1868 and come to Cincinnati to work with the elderly. Shortly after their arrival in October of that year, six sisters, in their black dresses, kerchiefs, and white bonnets, began their work in an old abandoned schoolhouse on George Street in the southwestern section of the city. Five years later they built on Florence Avenue in the eastern end the St. Joseph Home for the Aged, one of thirty-four homes for the poor the Little Sisters of the Poor opened in the country by 1900.\footnote{10}

After the arrival of the Sisters of the Poor to the archdiocese, Cincinnati obtained the services of three other orders of sisters to run parish schools. At Purcell's request Sisters of the Sacred Heart from Paris came to Cincinnati in 1869 and opened the Sacred Heart Academy and Convent in the downtown area with Mother Ellen Hogan as superior. In 1874 the convent was transferred to Echo Place on Grandin Road in the eastern end of Cincinnati. In the mid-1870s the Franciscans invited Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, located at Oldenburg, Indiana, to teach in their parish school. Four years later they ran a second school in Carthage. In 1880 the sisters were called to St. John parish at Middletown. During the next twenty years they took charge of several schools in the archdiocese. In August 1881 four Sisters of Christian Charity, upon the invitation of Father George Steinlage at Piqua, Ohio, took charge of the teaching duties at St. Boniface.\footnote{11}
During the second half of the nineteenth century the various sisterhoods became the backbone of the educational and social work in the hierarchical and male-dominated archdiocese. In the 1860s the girls’ schools were conducted by the Sisters of Notre Dame, the Ursuline Sisters, the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of St. Dominic, and the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood. The latter and the Sisters of Notre Dame were the only ones who taught in the German girls’ schools. As teachers, fund-raisers, choir directors, sponsors of religious organizations, coaches, active caregivers, and social service providers, women religious helped pioneer the growth of the Catholic Church, contributing their share to the religious and intellectual life of the archdiocese. In the process, their myriad activities afforded many of them leadership opportunities not available to most women in America at the time. Through their communities, which served as family and work for them, the sisters combined faith and labor to help build and shape a distinctive Catholic culture and American society.12

Though Purcell was always very much interested in obtaining more women religious for his archdiocese, he developed reservations regarding the Oblate Sisters of Providence, a congregation of black sisters in Baltimore. Early in his administration he had tried unsuccessfully to get them to establish a school for African Americans in the diocese. Again in 1850 he requested their services, only to find that they could not come for a year. The “Superior seems, if I may judge from her Letter,” Purcell wrote to Archbishop Eccleston of Baltimore, “to have an imperfect knowledge of English Grammar. She tells, or asks, me to ‘pray for I’. . . . Many of our blacks here could beat that.” When the sisters in 1857 expressed interest in establishing a colony in Cincinnati, Purcell again had his doubts. The letter “they write,” he wrote, “is fresh proof of their want of the English language, which many of our Colored folks read and write correctly. Still I hope I can find a place for them. We lately baptized twenty four colored children in Mercer County, where there is a large settlement of that race, and many adults are there preparing for baptism.” But the sisters never established a foundation in the archdiocese.13

SLAVERY AND THE CIVIL WAR

Though institutional energies of Cincinnati Catholics in the antebellum period were mostly devoted in providing poverty relief, health care, childcare, and employment assistance, the diocese did address the issue of slavery. Bishop Purcell, who personally “condemned slavery,” was in full agreement with the bull issued by Gregory XVI on December 3, 1839, denouncing the slave trade. One of the advantages of having his diocese in Ohio, he wrote in 1840,
was "the absence of slavery," for the Ohio River formed the border between the slave states in the South and the free ones in the North."

Though Ohio was a free state there were differences of opinions regarding the institution of slavery and African Americans. In the mid-1830s prominent individuals in Cincinnati, led by the mayor, sponsored anti-abolition meetings on the grounds that abolitionists pursued a course that hurt trade, threatened "to spread desolation and murder throughout the peaceful borders of our sister States," and would cause disorder within the union. When residents, including some Irish Catholics, staged anti–African American demonstrations in Cincinnati, Purcell publicly disapproved of them. While congratulating Bishop Anthony Blanc of New Orleans, perhaps his closest episcopal friend, on the founding of the Propagateur Catholique, he criticized the publication for placing advertisements on the hiring of slaves. "It is afflicting," he wrote in 1841, "to read such advertisements in a political journal. . . . It is not necessary to be an abolitionist to condemn a practice so repugnant to Catholic feelings." But not all the U.S. bishops thought alike on this subject. Purcell was reminded by Peter Kenrick of St. Louis that it "requires less courage" to oppose slavery in Cincinnati, where there was no slavery, than in his slave-owning state. Purcell was sufficiently concerned about the institution of slavery that he suggested it be discussed at the Fifth Provincial Council in Baltimore."

Almost three weeks before South Carolina voted to secede from the United States in December 1860, the Catholic Telegraph, reflecting Purcell's sentiments, decried the principle of secession and urged Catholics to remain loyal to the nation. In his January 13, 1861, address at the Catholic Institute, Purcell hoped "that the hideous rattlesnake of secession may be crushed to death." When the Civil War broke out the following April, the archbishop flew the U.S. flag over the cathedral. "The President has spoken," he said, and argued it was the duty of Catholics "to walk shoulder to shoulder" with all Americans in support of the nation. A few days later Bishop Martin John Spalding of Louisville shared with Purcell his disappointment that Cincinnati Catholics favored war. Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Baltimore informed Purcell that he chose not to comment publicly on Purcell's "views on the topics which agitate the country." It may have been just a coincidence, but in his visit to Rome in 1861 Purcell requested permission to retire. Either the negative reactions he received on the Union issue drove him to make the request or the sixty-one-year-old archbishop's sheer desire to spend his remaining years in retirement did. Five years earlier he had written to Blanc that he would "on the slightest hint of a want of confidence in my administration, tender my resignation." Notwithstanding the motive, the pope did not accept his resignation. Shortly after Purcell's return from Rome,
Spalding informed the Cincinnati ordinary that he was pleased the pope had refused his resignation. 46

When the Civil War broke out in 1861 the American hierarchy consisted of seven archbishops and thirty-seven bishops, among whom three-fourths lived in free states. The giant in the hierarchy was Hughes of New York. Purcell’s prestige, influence, and loyalty to the Union were also widely acknowledged. Some of Purcell’s fellow bishops advised him against taking sides. Martin Spalding, a southerner by birth and himself a slave owner, was disappointed to learn that Catholics in Ohio had fallen with the black Republicans favoring the Civil War. Purcell’s natural impetuosity and aggressiveness nevertheless led him to become an outspoken advocate of the northern cause. He, his brother, and Auxiliary Bishop Sylvester Rosecrans, who was assistant editor with Edward Purcell of the Catholic Telegraph and whose brother would become a general in the Union army, were strong Union men. Rosecrans, a convert from the Episcopal Church, was appointed the first auxiliary bishop in the archdiocese in 1862. Because of the many labors entailed in administering the archdiocese, Purcell had petitioned Rome several times for an auxiliary bishop. 37

Consistently loyal to the Union, the Cincinnati ordinary and his supporters denounced those Catholics who resisted being drafted into the Union army. “Something may be necessary in the way of manifesto,” Rosecrans wrote to Purcell, “to prevent . . . this mutinous spirit.” Ten days later on August 20, 1862, the diocesan paper editorialized that Catholics who refused to serve deserved “scant mercy. It is the same as if your house was on fire, and your neighbor would cut the hose, so that the water could not reach the burning building.” A year later when Cincinnati and New York experienced antidraft riots, the diocesan paper urged Catholics to uphold law and order. Though the Catholic Telegraph generally supported the Union’s cause, it nevertheless allowed some southern views to be published in the paper. It reminded its readers that though Catholics were divided on the issue of the Civil War, “in religion they are ever one in mind and heart.” 48

On the abolition of slavery issue, most American bishops during the Civil War were of the opinion that the issue was fundamentally political and economical, arguing that it had no bearing on the church’s mission of salvation and grace. Purcell thought otherwise. Five months before President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on New Year’s Day, 1863, Purcell issued a call for the abolition of slavery in the editorials of his diocesan paper. The Catholic Telegraph was the first Catholic paper in the country to come out unequivocally for emancipation of the slaves. At a time when most of the Catholic press in the North viewed the union as more important than the abolition of slavery, it was bold for the Cincinnati archbishop, situated on the
borders of slave states, to denounce in vigorous tones the institution of slavery. Arguing that the Catholic Church had always been the friend of liberty, Purcell hoped that everyone, regardless of color, would be free. "He who tries to perpetuate slavery," he wrote, "disrespects the doctrine and example of Christ." 59

Known to be "impulsive," at times "explosive," Purcell took an unequivocal stand on emancipation. He supported full emancipation. As a consequence, the archbishop lost a good deal of support, even among his suffragan bishops, and the diocesan paper lost subscribers. The overwhelming majority of Catholic newspapers in the country supported slavery. In the summer of 1864, the New York Tribune took issue with Purcell’s views on slavery and the Civil War. "We differ ... in politics from Archbishop Purcell, as we have a right to do," it wrote; "we are no Abolitionist as he is; we are no unconditional loyalist as he is." Through all this, Purcell did not retreat from his position. 50

At the same time that the New York Tribune took issue with Purcell, Bishop William Elder of Natchez, Mississippi, criticized Purcell’s pro-Union and abolitionist stance. Elder, who would some twenty-five years later become Purcell’s coadjutor bishop and successor, thought the Cincinnati ordinary and the Catholic Telegraph helped prolong the war. "We have felt pained," he wrote, "of hearing of bishops and priests publicly urging the vigorous prosecution of the war, and giving their influence to the enlistment of volunteers." When Elder wrote to Purcell in January 1864 he expressed concern about the North sending a particular young priest south, because southern law exempted from conscription only priests who had been duly licensed. Purcell or the editorial staff of the Catholic Telegraph or both misinterpreted the information. The diocesan paper warned all priests not to go south because a southern bishop had indicated that they would be drafted. Elder denied the allegation and demanded a retraction from Purcell and his paper. He felt that such a false report could do significant damage to the Catholics in the south. Writing to Purcell, Elder argued that the Cincinnati ordinary’s "zeal for the abolition of slavery and ... the success of certain political views" had too "much control over both ... [his] judgment and ... [his] feelings and that the consequences are injurious to religion." Though Purcell and the Catholic Telegraph never issued a retraction, Elder sent a correction to the Baltimore Mirror. A month later Elder apologized to Purcell for the strong language in his last letter. He hoped there would "not be any division between" them. Time eventually healed the wounds of these two longtime friends. 51

During the Civil War Purcell, Rosecrans, and some of the local clergy visited the war camps, where they preached and administered the sacraments.
Wanting to make sure that the soldiers did not have only Protestant texts at their disposal, Catholic literature was taken to them. In one instance Purcell lent $40 to a Confederate soldier. “It is to me a source of no little consolation,” he wrote to Archbishop John Odin of New Orleans, to “comfort prisoners and sick and wounded soldiers from the South as well as from the North.”

In the fall of 1864 Purcell also wrote a letter to President Lincoln in behalf of General William Beall, a Confederate general, who was a prisoner of war on an island in Lake Erie. He did this at the request of an old friend, Miss Catherine Todd, Lincoln’s sister-in-law. “Miss Kitty Todd,” he wrote, “begs me to intercede with you for the exchange of General William Beall. . . . Surely it is time to show him at least so much mercy when much more has been extended to many others. So do good Mr. President,” he continued, “grant me this favor and let me feel that we have a President who has some little regard for the old Archbishop of Cincinnati.” The president eventually ordered General Beall’s release.

Thirty-six Sisters of Charity, eleven of Mercy, and ten of the Poor of St. Francis from the archdiocese also generously volunteered their services during the Civil War. Like the other sister nurses in the United States, they contributed tradition, experience, skills, and religious commitment to Civil War nursing. They were unique among the few thousand women who cared for the sick during the conflict. Sister Anthony O’Connell, who was foremost among the Sisters of Charity, helped organize sisters for nursing on the battlefields. The Irish-born sister came to Cincinnati as a young teenager in 1837 and, during the next sixty years, became connected with all the many charitable institutions her order established in Cincinnati. By June 1861 Sisters of Charity were at Richmond, Virginia, and at Camp Dennison near Cincinnati, taking care of the wounded soldiers. At times they had to walk in mud and water over their shoe tops in heavy rains. During the war some of the sisters from Cedar Grove and St. John’s Hospital moved with the army and went to Cumberland, New Creek in Virginia, Nashville, Shiloh, and Pittsburgh Landing, and a group went to the Army Hospital at Gallipolis, Ohio. It was at the battle of Shiloh in 1862 that Sister Anthony won for herself the surname “Angel of the Battlefield.” There she demonstrated exemplary valor and mercy while gathering the wounded and assisting the surgeons in their work.

From their Fourth Street convent the Cincinnati Sisters of Mercy also helped in the military hospitals and on the battlefield by dressing wounds and giving medicines. Following the battle of Shiloh, three sisters went to the battlefield and attended to the wounded and to cases of smallpox. Besides performing their nursing duties at St. John’s Hospital and aboard river ships that were converted into hospital transports, they also rented their house in
Cincinnati to the government to serve as a hospital for the wounded until the end of the war. The women and children under the charge of the sisters were taken into the convent.\textsuperscript{55}

At the beginning of the war three Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis supervised for six months the Federal Military Hospital in Cincinnati. In May 1862 three other sisters and two postulants, accompanied by Sarah Peter, attended to the wounded soldiers on a hospital boat. Two years later Archbishop Purcell requested some of the sisters to visit the soldiers at Camp Chase near Cincinnati to provide both material and spiritual support to the men. Because of prejudice against the clergy by some of the officers, priests were not allowed at the camp. He was hopeful that the sisters, who by then had established a solid reputation to providing generous service to the soldiers, would be accepted.\textsuperscript{56}

The various sisters' involvement as nurses, as one in five Civil War nurses were women religious, gave them more exposure to the lay public and helped enhance their public activities and image. Sister Anthony and the more than six hundred women religious, representing twelve religious orders, who nursed on the battlefields and in army hospitals, helped change, though some stereotypes persisted, the tide of public sentiment toward the sisters from one of suspicion to one of respect and high praise. Gradually the sisters, who first saw themselves as missionaries promoting religion, became more identified with their commitment to Christian living and humane concerns and, in the process, they helped enhance a more positive view of Catholicism.\textsuperscript{57}

After the war the archdiocese, through its archbishop and diocesan paper, called upon the faithful to extend the hand of charity to the newly freed blacks to enable them to earn their own living and preserve their faith. In their philanthropic work toward African Americans, Catholics nationally in the immediate post–Civil War period lagged far behind that of Protestants. They had no organization resembling the American Missionary Association. Catholics had a responsibility, the Catholic Telegraph wrote, "to educate and christianize the freedmen." In 1866 the Jesuits, under the leadership of Francis Weninger, helped organize St. Ann's Colored Church and School in the west end, the first parish organized in the archdiocese to meet the needs of African Americans. At the time there were fewer than 6,000 blacks in Cincinnati, and only a small number of them were Catholic. Weninger, who devoted his life to helping the poor and had seen whites discriminate against blacks when they worshiped with them in some of the local parishes, believed that the blacks should have their separate parish. He raised more than $4,000 to help build a combination church and school on Longworth Street between Elm and Race in the west end. The Holy Trinity Church
parish donated one thousand dollars for the purpose. In 1871 St. Ann's was one of only six Catholic churches established exclusively for blacks in the United States. Two years later the archdiocese purchased the African Methodist Episcopal Church on New Street, near the Jesuits at St. Xavier Church, and transferred the operations of St. Ann parish there. The Sisters of Notre Dame, who had been giving convert instructions to blacks, began teaching in St. Ann school in 1867. The following year Weninger founded the St. Peter Claver Society, named after the Jesuit who, in the early 1600s, converted thousands of slaves in Colombia to Catholicism, to help spread the Gospel to blacks as well as help provide money to support a school for both boys and girls. Though at first members contributed one dollar per month, by 1874 they reduced the amount to twenty-five cents per month in order to increase membership. Purcell's contribution of one hundred dollars made him a lifetime honorary member.58

NEW SEMINARY

Shortly after his return from Europe in 1851, Purcell began making plans to build a new and larger theological seminary to educate young men. As in other dioceses in the United States, the archdiocese of Cincinnati had a predominantly immigrant clergy to care for pastoral needs. Like his episcopal colleagues and other church leaders who founded or expanded seminaries in the nineteenth century, Purcell sought to provide a clergy trained in the United States. Though indebted to the European priests for their services, Cincinnati Catholics lamented not having more of their own local and American seminarians. Moreover, it became evident to Purcell that if the seminary were to provide more priests, it needed a fixed location and more financial support. Unlike the European church, the American church, including the archdiocese of Cincinnati, had no revenues from endowments to help support the operation of a seminary.59

In its brief history the diocesan seminary had undergone several changes of location. In 1842 Bishop Purcell had persuaded the Congregation of the Missions (more popularly known as Vincentians or as Lazarists) to operate the seminary, then located on a donated farm near Fayetteville in Brown County. The seminary had moved there when the Jesuits took charge of the college in Cincinnati. From 1842 to 1845 the Vincentians discharged all the duties of the seminary. Because of the distance of about forty miles from the city and the difficulties of slow travel, some thought Brown County was an undesirable location for an ecclesiastical seminary. Purcell and the Vincentians, furthermore, did not always agree on the operation of the seminary. The Vincentians resented the bishop's interference. The final blow came in
the summer of 1845 when Purcell placed the newly arrived Ursuline Sisters in Brown County and, without consulting the Vincentians, brought the seminarians back to Cincinnati. He housed them temporarily in the scholasticate attached to St. Xavier College on Sycamore Street. Displeased with the bishop's treatment, the Vincentians immediately withdrew from the seminary. The seminarians stayed with the Jesuits for about two years. In 1848 seminary classes were conducted at the episcopal residence at West Eighth Street. After consulting with the clergy at the diocesan synod of 1848, Purcell the following year inaugurated an annual seminary collection in each parish of the diocese. Up to that time Catholics had made contributions for the building and support of churches, schools, and orphanages, and the relief of the destitute. Now they would also provide financial support for the seminary. At a time when the number of local seminaries in the United States under the direct sponsorship of the individual ordinaries decreased, largely because of the need to build more churches, Purcell challenged local Catholics to build a new seminary.60

Through the generosity of several Catholic laymen, a new seminary building was built on top of Price Hill on the west side of The Mill Creek. Michael and Patrick Considine, two Irish brothers, donated five acres of land. John and James Slevin, two other Irish brothers, built a four-story building at their own expense. The new location provided, as Purcell put it, a "delightful Panoramic view" of Cincinnati and its neighboring communities. While the seminary was under construction, Purcell withdrew the seminarians from St. Xavier College and placed them temporarily in the attic of the bishop's new episcopal residence at Eighth and Plum Streets. Father Michael M. Hallinan, an Irish priest who had just completed his doctoral studies in theology in Europe, was put in charge. On October 2, 1851, the new diocesan seminary, at a cost of $22,116, opened with twelve seminarians in residence. In grateful remembrance of Mount St. Mary in Emmitsburg, where Purcell had served as rector for three years, the name of the seminary was also changed at the time from St. Francis Xavier to Mount St. Mary's of the West. The scholarly Purcell took a lively and close personal interest in the seminary. He often solicited books in his travels for its library.61

At Purcell's request, Cincinnati's first provincial council in 1855 proposed making Mount St. Mary's of the West a provincial seminary. The idea had received enthusiastic support from Bishop Michael O'Connor of Pittsburgh and Archbishop Peter Kenrick of St. Louis. Though this acknowledgment would make no difference in Mount St. Mary's day-to-day operation, it was a vote of confidence by the bishops in the newly formed Province of Cincinnati, which had been established in 1850 when Cincinnati was made an archdiocese. In addition, the bishops petitioned the pope to make Mount St.
Mary's a pontifical seminary, enabling it to confer doctorate degrees in philosophy and theology. The bishops also proposed making St. Thomas Seminary in Kentucky a provincial preparatory seminary. The hierarchy was hopeful that in time the clergymen trained in the seminaries would prove as competent as those educated in Europe. "We seek not to disguise the fact," Purcell later informed his clergy and laity, "that we aim, above all things, at the education of . . . a native born clergy."

The petition for a provincial seminary came up at a time when the pope, attempting to tighten its rule and authority in the Catholic Church, was considering the idea of establishing a college specifically for American seminarians in Rome, similar to those of other nations. A Roman education would help assure loyalty to the Holy See and provide some assurance for advancement of Roman centralization and authority. At first even Purcell was warm to the idea. "I shall be most happy at the realization of the Nuncio's inspiration of having a College founded for American students in Rome," he wrote in 1854. He promised to do what he could "towards its success." He even contemplated donating some money from the sale of a piece of land for it. When the project of the Roman College came up at the Provincial Council in 1855, however, the bishops, including Purcell, voted against it. They feared it would divert money raised in the various dioceses that were needed to build up their own seminary and a "Little Seminary" for the Cincinnati province. "The Roman College," Purcell wrote, "would withdraw from those two institutions much of the support they will need."

A strong supporter of an American pontifical college in Rome was Archbishop Hughes, who went so far as to solicit pledges from his episcopal colleagues. It did not surprise Purcell that New York Catholics, "with their comparatively vast resources," he wrote, would want it. "They may as well found the College and underwrite it, and let us who are poor, or poorer, send students there at a stipulated stipend for each one we send." He also had his doubts about the wisdom of sending seminarians to Rome to be educated. In light of the political unrest in Italy, he felt Rome was "not healthy." More importantly, he argued, "vocations are not fostered there with the same success with which they are elsewhere. Of eight sent to Rome from this Diocese by my Predecessor and myself only two became priests there."

Approximately two years elapsed before the Propaganda denied Cincinnati's request for a pontifical seminary. The Prefect of the Propaganda informed Purcell that the project for an American College in Rome had been approved and that the American bishops were to come up with ways of financing it. Reprimanded a little for not being more supportive of the Roman College, in the fall of 1858 Purcell unenthusiastically sent to Rome a contribution of $5,000 for the new college. When it opened in December
1859, with twelve seminarians enrolled, Purcell was still concerned about the unrest in Rome. So much so that he refused to send any of his students there the first year. But gradually he became more cooperative. Though he did not want his “American clergy . . . educated, as a body, anywhere but at home,” he wrote in 1868, “it is both practicable and desirable that, like other nations, we should have a college in Rome, where American bishops, priests and tourists” might have a place to visit. Even though each year, throughout the remainder of his administration, an archdiocesan collection for the American College in Rome was made on the first Sunday in November, Purcell still had reservations. He preferred seminary training in American seminaries. In 1871 he advised a potential donor not to give $5,000 to the American College. Pointing out that the archdiocese had already paid $5,200 and had derived no benefit from it, he urged her to consider making the donation to Mount St. Mary’s of the West Seminary.

Even though the Cincinnati seminary enjoyed steady growth in the 1850s, seeing its enrollment grow from twenty-three seminarians in 1854 to ninety seminarians and lay students in 1858, Purcell was concerned over the lack of financial support. “While our people have responded most generously to every appeal in behalf of the orphans and other charities,” he wrote in his pastoral letter of January 1864, “the education of the Clergy . . . has never enlisted their sympathy to the extent required. There are not more than six families, in all the Diocese, who have ‘done well’ for its foundation.”

In an effort to obtain students for the seminary, in the fall of 1856 Purcell established Mount St. Mary’s College in connection with it. It remained in operation until 1862, when circumstances during the Civil War forced its discontinuance. From that point on, Mount St. Mary’s of the West Seminary was a strictly theological seminary. Its history has been closely linked with the history of Catholicity in the West and South. Staffed with a learned faculty of diocesan priests, Mount St. Mary’s of the West Seminary not only helped produce competent priests for the archdiocese, but from it many priests carried on the work of the church in the western and southern states of the nation. Notwithstanding Purcell’s concerns over the paltry parish contributions in support of the seminary in the early 1860s, until 1879 Mount St. Mary’s enjoyed a period of financial stability largely because of the support of the parishes of the archdiocese and an increasing enrollment of seminarians.

Purcell’s interest in building a seminary to provide a much-needed diocesan clergy also reflected his attitude toward the religious orders. Part of the reason the Vincentians left the diocese had to do with the strained relations between James Burlando, the Vincentian superior of the bishop’s seminary in Brown County, and Purcell. Burlando often complained to his superior that the Cincinnati ordinary wanted to retain full control of the seminary.
Though Purcell had assured the Vincentian provincial that he was satisfied with the administration of the seminary, Burlando countered that Purcell had a “very poor opinion of [religious] communities,” and would “not so easily give any chance that might be advantageous” to religious communities. It is clear that the Vincentian superior wanted his order to have a parish and seminary of its own. When Purcell moved the seminary into his own house in 1845, the provincial finally decided to withdraw the congregation from the diocese.\textsuperscript{66}

At the same time that Purcell appreciated and often praised the work of the religious orders in his diocese, having been personally involved in bringing some of them to the diocese, he was concerned over any diminution of his episcopal authority. His concern was typical of a diocesan clergyman’s reaction to the separate orders. The local Jesuit superior, John Elet, observed that at times Purcell appeared indifferent or cool toward the order. Nevertheless, Purcell often praised the Jesuits for their work. Writing to Archbishop Eccleston in December 1845, Purcell noted that the Jesuits “are, individually, most exemplary & edifying priests. . . .” But, he added, “it is their too great zeal . . . for their society that is at fault.” Notwithstanding some early disagreements between the Jesuits and Purcell, relations between them improved. By 1847 Elet described Purcell as “every day more and more benevolent” toward the order.\textsuperscript{67}

Also, during this period, Purcell opposed the Dominicans’ effort to start a college at their headquarters at Somerset. Differences between Purcell and the Dominicans date back to the bishop’s inability to collect the annual $300 from them. When the Society for the Propagation of the Faith at Lyons requested Purcell’s advice on the establishment of a Dominican college, the bishop’s response was emphatic. Not only did he think that such a proposal first should go though him, he felt the Dominicans were trying to do too much and should confine themselves to parochial work. But at the same time that Purcell denied the Dominicans’ request to start a college, he gave permission to the Fathers of the Holy Cross, who had founded the University of Notre Dame in 1842, to establish St. Joseph College on West Eighth Street in Cincinnati. Founded on October 2, 1871, it was incorporated under Ohio laws in 1873. Because of the national bank crisis of 1873 and the ensuing economic depression, the college experienced financial difficulties from the start. Due to mounting financial liability, the order closed the college in 1920.\textsuperscript{70}

**FINANCIAL CRISIS OF 1878**

In 1876, when the country celebrated its one-hundredth birthday, Purcell celebrated his Golden Jubilee—fifty years—as a priest on May 21. A weeklong
celebration began on that day. Though common in Europe, the Golden Jubilee of Archbishop Purcell’s priesthood may very well have been the first celebration of the kind in the American church. As the country celebrated its many accomplishments, Purcell also had much to celebrate. Catholic churches were increasing in number, newer and larger ones were replacing smaller ones, educational institutions and religious communities were growing, and the seminary had 130 students. Yet, two years later a financial crisis occurred in the archdiocese that drove the archbishop from power.  

For about three decades the bishops of the Cincinnati Province had expressed concern over the tenure of church property and the loans of money by individuals to priests for safekeeping. Wanting to preserve church property, the bishops at their provincial council meetings in the 1850s decided that all diocesan church property be held in fee simple by the bishop of each diocese. Some of the bishops, moreover, disapproved of the practice of making loans to priests, while others argued that the money was useful for building churches. A compromise was reached prohibiting priests to accept loans and to receive money on deposit without the permission of the bishop. Since Purcell held parish property in his name, not only did he approve of the compromise but he also directed his clergy to inform the faithful that the bishop was not responsible for parish debts. "We should prefer that churches should never be built," Purcell wrote to his suffragan bishops in 1858, "rather than to see the priest involve himself in debt for their construction."

At the same time that Purcell expressed public concern over the acceptance of loans by parish priests, he was, through his brother Edward, operating a banking enterprise out of the cathedral residence. Besides being a church leader, pastor, and builder, the archbishop was also a banker. "I have reason to bless God," he wrote to Archbishop Kenrick, "that my brother has been enabled so well to meet all the demands made on him in the crashing of banks and the failure of so many mercantile houses during the past year—and this notwithstanding [he made] a most heavy outlay for our orphan asylum." The archdiocese used some of the money to help build the cathedral, churches, schools, and orphanages, loan money to individuals, and finance episcopal projects. Though Purcell had his doubts about the practice of accepting deposits, he had great faith in his brother’s financial acumen. In the wake of several bank failures in the country in 1854, Purcell at the time considered the possibility of liquidating the bank and selling some of the property that had "no special use for any religious or charitable objects . . . as soon as times [would] improve" in order to pay some of his debts. When a more severe financial panic occurred in 1857, resulting in the closing of many more banks, there were heavier deposits with Edward Purcell. "Thank God," the archbishop wrote to Blanc, "we, of the cathedral, are getting through the
‘epidemic financière’ bravely.” But the Purcell brothers did not survive the next financial panic.²³

In 1878 a devastating financial failure struck the informal private banking operation of Edward Purcell. For approximately forty years the archbishop’s brother, whom Purcell entrusted with total responsibility on financial matters and control of the “purse strings,” had been accepting deposits for safekeeping from Catholics in the archdiocese and other Ohio residents. As confidence in the private banks was shaky and news spread of Edward Purcell’s banking business, more and more people found comfort in placing their savings in the hands of the archbishop and his brother. Over a forty-year period perhaps as much as twenty-five million dollars were deposited in the bishop’s bank. Archbishop Purcell always claimed that as they accepted these deposits the perceived needs of a growing diocese were uppermost on their minds.²⁴

There had been, since the national panic of 1873, a series of financial crises in Cincinnati. By 1878 a number of small banks were forced to close their doors. A panic ensued and there was a run on Purcell’s bank. To make matters worse, the city’s leading bankers no longer accepted Purcell’s notes. The archbishop’s priest-brother had used personal notes from his debtors, individuals to whom he had loaned money, as collateral to secure loans from banks to help meet demands from his depositors. Although by November Edward Purcell, on the brink of a nervous breakdown, had paid out more than $100,000, he could not meet all the requests from the depositors. “This dull, gloomy, day,” he wrote, “makes me long for heaven.”²⁵

The following month some of the clergy in the archdiocese met at St. Xavier College to draw up plans to help the archbishop in this time of crisis. They formed a committee, consisting of William J. Halley, pastor of the cathedral and chancellor of the archdiocese, John Albrinck, pastor of Holy Trinity Church, Ubald Webersinke, Provincial of the Franciscans, and Edward A. Higgins, president of St. Xavier College, to meet with the archbishop. As a way of restoring public confidence, the committee urged Purcell to make a public statement “to the effect that he holds himself . . . responsible for all financial claims against his brother.” They also proposed that he provide “as security for such claims and liabilities, . . . all the assets, of whatever kind or value, that belong to him, as well as all the properties” that belonged to the diocese. If there appeared “an excess of liabilities over the assets,” the four clergymen assured Purcell that “the clergy present at this conference pledge themselves . . . to cooperate cordially with the Most Reverend Archbishop in providing means to meet all the demands, and pay off all debts.” Later they realized that in their resolve to pay the entire debt they had, as Albrinck put it, “undertaken a fool’s task.” Moreover, their rec-
ommendation to pledge the local church’s property as security for the liabilities of the bank failure would later be discounted by the court.  

Three days before Christmas Archbishop Purcell, consumed with worry, suspended any further payments to creditors. He announced that his brother could no longer meet the immediate demands of those wanting to withdraw their money. Unburdening himself, he assured the faithful that he had not spent the money “in waste or extravagance.” Purcell insisted that the deposits had been accepted to help build churches, orphanages, seminaries, as well as help finance other episcopal projects. If Rome could not help him resolve the financial crisis, he hoped to rely, he said, “in the charity and goodness of the laity to pay all.” Quite unexpectedly, the seventy-eight-year-old Purcell, who was showing signs of age and wear, also announced that he had sent his resignation to Rome, asking to be relieved on account of his age and the increased labor in administering the finances of the church. In an attempt to quiet the storm of protests by creditors, that same day Edward Purcell informed the press that church property could be sold to help pay the debt. “A very small fraction of the Church property in our Diocese would pay all the debts,” he said, “but we will not, I think, need to call upon the Church for any.”

The response to the archbishop’s resignation was immediate. Prominent Catholic businessmen, who did not want him to resign, promised to help. “Catholics of this diocese,” one of them told reporters, “would rise up to a man and do their utmost to have him remain at the helm.” The clergy of the diocese wired a telegram to the pope, urging him not to accept Purcell’s resignation on the grounds that it “would be a deplorable loss to religion.” Purcell also received several letters of encouragement and sympathy from his episcopal colleagues. Archbishop James Gibbons of Baltimore informed Purcell that the news of his application to resign made him “really sad. I would like to see the Prelate die at his post,” he wrote, “who has been an example to all of us in singleness of purpose, and apostolic heroism.” Bishop Joseph Dwenger of Fort Wayne was “extremely sorry,” he wrote to Purcell, “that after a long life of glorious and successful labours you should have to pass through this adversity.”

For several months the clergy and laity raised money through benefit concerts, bond issues, and bazaars. Individual gifts ranging from $1,000 to $5,000 also came in. Though more than $40,000 were raised in a short period of time, that amount would prove inadequate in the face of the mounting debt. In one instance, the Montana Lottery Company offered to raise three million dollars in one year, contingent on the repeal of a state law forbidding lotteries. Many priests and members of the laity, however, opposed the lottery on moral grounds.
As efforts were made to raise money to help pay the debt, creditors persisted in their efforts to get their money. Though most waited in paralytic disbelief, some went to the cathedral residence and demanded their money. They were forcibly ejected. On another occasion, a priest at the residence was threatened with his life.80

When it came time for Edward Purcell to disclose records of the financial transactions, he “had no books to turn over to them, only a bundle of notes.” After spending six weeks auditing Edward Purcell’s accounts, the diocesan trustees were appalled by what they found. Though they saw “no reason to suspect any dishonesty,” they did find, in addition to the large amount paid as interest, “bad investments, shrinkage in value, misplaced confidence and unbusiness-like management.” At first the loss was estimated to be approximately $100,000. By February 1879 auditors estimated the loss to be in excess of a million dollars. Three months later it reached $3,697,651.49. As the amount of the indebtedness grew, Purcell kept reassuring the creditors that not one of them “would be wronged out of a dollar.” He wanted them to know that the diocese was ultimately responsible for repayment of the debt.81

But as the debt mounted, support from the clergy steadily eroded. Many were fearful they could lose their property. In February 1879 the Franciscan Otto Jair pointed out that the German parishes had received very little financial assistance from Purcell. “We have raised the money to build our churches by the sweat of our brow,” he said. “I have not received a cent toward the creation of these churches from the Archbishop, nor have I asked for any.” A year later many priests no longer believed that the diocese was obligated to repay the debt, arguing that Edward Purcell had run the bank as a private individual.82

All along the archbishop supported his brother and reiterated the diocesan nature of the debt. As divisions grew among the clergy, the Catholic Telegraph repeatedly expressed and supported Purcell’s position, declaring that the “Catholic Church never repudiates. It may take years to wipe out this heavy debt . . . , [but] Catholics of the whole country, poor and rich alike will soon form themselves into a vast army of charity.” It mistakenly assumed that Catholics everywhere would regard the affliction in the diocese of Cincinnati as their own. Cardinal John McCloskey, the highest-ranking church official in the United States at the time and Purcell’s former student at Emmitsburg, launched a national campaign to assist Purcell. While he did, he also made it clear that the effort was done out of “charity.” He argued that each diocese was responsible for its own financial administration and that the church was under no obligation to pay the debt. McCloskey’s campaign, however, fell far short of its expectations, raising approximately $60,000. Bishop Francis Silas Chatard of Vincennes perhaps captured the mood of
many when he noted that the debt "is simply impossible to pay. . . . I don't see anything but inevitable failure and bankruptcy. . . . We don't want to throw our money into a swamp where it will be lost entirely. . . ."81

In the spring of 1879 Purcell finally heard from Rome. The pope did not accept his resignation. He decided, instead, to assist him by appointing a coadjutor to the archdiocese. The financial disaster of 1878 and Purcell's declining health, which had deteriorated more during the crisis, made imperative the appointment of a coadjutor. Because of his weak eyes Purcell was also unable to do much reading. Although in financial difficulty, and obviously weakened physically, Purcell in October 1879 nevertheless traveled to Fort Loramie and helped celebrate the laying of the cornerstone of the new St. Michael Church. After the ceremony he spoke a few words. "When the people of this parish finish this according to plans and the rough work is paid for," he said, "after two years I will return and consecrate it to the honor of God and praise of the parish." But that trip would never take place. At the end of November 1879 Purcell, upon the advice of his friends, left the city and went to the Ursuline convent in Brown County. The archbishop initially interpreted the pope's decision to provide him with a coadjutor as a vote of confidence. But when the Propaganda on January 16, 1880, wired Purcell that it had named Bishop William Henry Elder of Natchez as his coadjutor, he also learned that he was to be archbishop in name only. Elder was put in charge of the archdiocese. Disheartened, Purcell went to the convent's chapel and laid himself "almost prostrate on the altar." After finishing his prayers, he informed Sister Mary Baptist Fraener that "it would have been a fitting end to his life could he have died on that altar step—were it God's will." In reality, the financial crash and woes of the archdiocese undermined Purcell's administration, drove him from power, and retired both him and his brother to the Ursuline convent.82

The bishops of the Cincinnati province had unanimously recommended the nomination of Elder. Archbishop James Gibbons also felt that Elder, because of his administrative experience at Natchez, was the strongest candidate to attend to "the desperate state of affairs in Cincinnati." As coadjutor and administrator of the archdiocese, Elder was entrusted with the responsibility of straightening out the unresolved financial crisis. Finding someone to take on this challenge had not been an easy task. Bishops Edward Fitzgerald of Little Rock, Arkansas, and Bernard McQuaid of Rochester, New York, had also been considered for the Cincinnati post. They both indicated to authorities in Rome that they would not accept the appointment. In April 1880 Purcell resigned all his affairs to Elder.85

While the archdiocesan hierarchy underwent an administrative change, the creditors, who had gotten restless with the state of affairs, instituted a
number of civil suits. The court appointed J. B. Mannix, a Catholic attorney, as Purcell’s assignee to handle his financial affairs. A number of creditors unsuccessfully petitioned the court to appoint another assignee, claiming that he was too close to Purcell and the church. Mannix tried to appease the creditors by filing a motion in the courts requesting permission to sell 211 churches, convents, schools, orphanages, among other institutions in the archbishop’s name, and to use the proceeds to help liquidate the debt. Meanwhile, the priests of the diocese retained the services of three lawyers to help prevent the sale of the local church’s property. The clergy also passed resolutions declaring that Purcell held the church property in his name in trust for the various parishes and institutions. They further argued that such property could not be sold to pay off the debt unless it could be shown that it had “been acquired by moneys furnished by . . . Edward Purcell, or by . . . J. B. Purcell, and not repaid. . . . “ Legal and social issues related to the financial crisis would drag on throughout much of Elder’s first decade in office."

Notwithstanding the stigma associated with the banking crisis, the Purcell years saw unparalleled growth in the diocese. In the nineteenth century the massive network of educational and charitable institutions, which benefited from parish fairs and pageants and male and female benevolent organizations, was largely built by a working-class, immigrant population. No population has had a more decisive influence on the history of the local church, and which is true of the American church as well, than that of its many teaching orders. In particular, women religious in the archdiocese, like many of their counterparts in other dioceses, established a remarkable record of achievement. Living in religious communities that prepared them for a perpetual life of service, they created and operated numerous educational, charitable, health care, and social service institutions. They, the clergy, other religious, and the Catholic laity played a critical role in institution building in the Midwest.87