Converting the Missionaries

The Transformation of Benedictine Priests at Crow Creek

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In the spring of 1937, Abbot Ignatius Esser of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in southern Indiana sent Father Stanislaus Maudlin to the Benedictine College in Rome to study theology and scripture.[1] In addition to his formal studies, Maudlin learned new cultures and languages as he traveled through Europe until international tensions grew into World War II. In late January 1939, the United States embassy directed Americans to leave Italy. After attending the funeral of Pius XI and election of Pius XII, the twenty-three-year-old monk briefly returned to Saint Meinrad before being sent to Immaculate Conception Mission School at Stephan on the Crow Creek Indian Reservation. It was not his time at the Vatican in Rome, in fact, that Maudlin later recognized as his most powerful religious experience. Rather, the Benedictine priest had his most transformative spiritual moment working with Dakotas at Crow Creek.[2]

Many Catholic priests changed their lives and perspectives in Indian country. While some of Maudlin's Benedictine predecessors noted cul-

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1. Saint Meinrad Archabbey was founded in 1854 by monks from Einsiedeln Abbey in Switzerland. Esser was the fourth abbot and served in that capacity from 1930–1955. Maudlin was born 16 December 1916 in Indiana, entered monastic life in 1934, and died in South Dakota on 22 January 2006. A founding member of Blue Cloud Abbey in Marvin, South Dakota, he was buried at Blue Cloud Abbey Cemetery. "Fr. Stanislaus 'Stan' Maudlin," *Find a Grave*, findagrave.com/memorial/60216052/stanislaus-maudlin, accessed 21 Feb. 2020; "History of Saint Meinrad-The Monastery," saintmeinrad.org/the-monastery/history, accessed 21 Feb. 2020.

2. Father Stanislaus Maudlin, oral diary, Blue Cloud Abbey, 4 Dec. 1977, American Indian Research Project (hereafter AIRP) 1529, South Dakota Oral History Center, University of South Dakota, Vermillion (hereafter SDOHC).

tural and philosophical changes in themselves, he recognized that intercultural relations deepened his spirituality. Like many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century priests who moved west, Maudlin remembered arriving at Crow Creek with "the arrogance of a non-Indian" who often believed that native people "have no values or ideals." Parochial school and seminary had taught him to use abstract adjectives such as "omnipotent," and "omniscient," but he later concluded that this training was failing him in his missionary work. While meeting with Crow Creek Catholics at the old Fort Thompson, where the Big Bend Dam now stands, Maudlin was struck by new ways to think about the metaphysical world. "God-given sensitivity," he claimed, helped him question his basic premises and seek help. That is when he turned to Catholic catechist Clem Wounded Knee for assistance. "After my pleading, he gently looked at me out of the corner of his eye," the priest recalled, "and with the kindest and most gentle voice, he said to me, 'Father, don't you know that God is nice?'" With this admonition, Maudlin began to recognize new understandings of the sacred. "This one word, 'nice,' freed me," he asserted, "freed me from the burdens that had been laid on me by the legalities of our religions. . . . With one word, Clem Wounded Knee freed me in Christ." The effect was lasting. "Now, I can pray to God freely," he revealed. "I know . . . he's going to be persevering in his pursuit of me. . . . In a word, now I know He loves me."[3]

Father Stanislaus Maudlin lived in a different era than his predecessors at Stephan mission, but even so, he had not been any more informed about native people prior to his arrival than Fathers Pierre-Jean De Smet, Pius Boehm, or Justin Snyder. Still, Maudlin's experiences in Indian country proved quite different from theirs. Over time, Boehm and Snyder grew to appreciate individuals within their congregations and to cheer on the students as they excelled in Catholic and American traditions. These men, each in their own way, also adapted to native people and traditions. Maudlin, who arrived at Crow Creek more than fifty years after Boehm, however, came to this new cultural setting with more questions. Over time, he grew both to embrace native traditions and question elements of his own. Ultimately, Maudlin and his generation of Benedictine monks emerged as leaders in the 1960s and 1970s

3. Ibid.

and promoted a new dynamic in intercultural relations.[4] Still, these monks' more notable transformations grew from a foundation of intercultural relations established by their late nineteenth-century predecessors.

The Crow Creek reservation is home to varied divisions of the historic Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires) sometimes known as the Sioux Confederation. Mainly, the community was composed of Lower Yanktonais (Hunkpatis) as well as families with links to eastern Dakotas and western Lakotas. Fathers Pius Boehm, Ambrose Mattingly, Sylvester Eisenman, Justin Snyder, and Stanislaus Maudlin, all members of the Order of Saint Benedict from Saint Meinrad, were but a few of the many who served in this part of Indian country. These men, all trained at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, developed new skills, identities, and perspectives about their work and themselves during their early years in the West that followed throughout their lives. Whether or not they were "converted" depends upon one's definition of the term. Their experiences and those of other Catholic priests in South Dakota were consistent with the views of theologians who see conversion as a long-term process rather than a singular act.

One of the best-known nineteenth-century missionaries on the Northern Great Plains was Jesuit Pierre-Jean De Smet, who engaged with bands of the Oceti Sakowin for several decades, culminating in four western trips up the Missouri River during the 1860s. More than simply carrying the Gospel to tribal communities, De Smet developed numerous connections with native people during his extensive travels. He formed one such relationship with American Fur Company trader Zephyr Rencontre, who helped him navigate physical and cultural challenges along the Missouri River. "Zephyr was a good friend of mine," De Smet noted, "and I resolved to practice a little strategy to secure his

4. For examples of contemporary scholarship that examines the greater complexity in intercultural relations and religious identity, *see* Harvey Markowitz, *Converting the Rosebud: Catholic Missions and the Lakotas, 1886–1916* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018); Luke Lassiter, Clyde Ellis, and Ralph Kotay, *The Jesus Road: Kiowas, Christianity, and Indian Hymns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Christopher Vecsey, *American Indian Catholics*, 3 vols. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999); and James Treat, ed., *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

company to the Little Cheyenne and his assistance there."[5] Rencontre, who had married into the Yanktons and lived in that community for decades, served as an advisor and provided the missionary with connections to friends and relatives who could provide food and lodging during his travels. De Smet thanked him for his assistance, baptized his son Alexis along the Missouri River, and kept in touch with Rencontre when he returned east—signing letters as "devoted Father and friend."[6]

With the assistance of Rencontre, De Smet cultivated several friendships with notable tribal leaders along the Missouri River. Yankton leader Struck by the Ree saw the Jesuit as instrumental in his people's response to the 1853 cholera epidemic and developed a decades-long relationship with De Smet. As opposed to Protestant ministers he had met, Struck by the Ree trusted the Catholics to minister to his people and teach his Yankton descendants. After more than twenty years, he and his wife agreed to be baptized and thereby strengthen the relationship between his people and De Smet.[7] Similarly, the priest's relationship with Yanktonai leader Two Bear led the latter to hold the Black Robe in high esteem. Two Bear had grown increasingly suspicious of federal officials by the later 1860s but trusted De Smet. When negotiating with federal officials for a new agent, he told them, "We wish Father De Smet to stay in our country." DeSmet likewise appreciated Two Bear, referring to him as "my adopted brother" and empathizing with the challenges his Yanktonai people faced.[8]

Each new relationship or experience helped to transform De Smet's notions, and he slowly adjusted his approaches to missionary work de-

5. Hiram Martin Chittenden, *A History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River: Life and Adventures of Joseph LaBarge, Pioneer Navigator and Indian Trader* (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1903), pp. 66–67.

6. Pierre-Jean De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels of Father De Smet*, ed. Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson, 4 vols. (1905; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press and *New York Times*, 1969), 3:891, 4:1311, 4:1472. *See also* Gilbert J. Garraghan, S.J., *The Jesuits of the Middle United States* (New York: America Press, 1938), 476n.

7. De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels*, 4:1283–85; Mary Claudia Duratschek, *Crusading along Sioux Trails: A History of the Catholic Indian Missions of South Dakota* (Yankton, S.Dak.: Benedictine Convent of the Sacred Heart, 1947), p. 49.

8. Vine Deloria and Raymond DeMallie, eds., *Proceedings of the Great Peace Commission of 1867–68* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Development of Indian Law, 1975), p. 139; De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels*, 4:1221, 1291, 1537.

Two Bear, pictured here around 1870, had served as a guide for Pierre-Jean De Smet on the missionary's visits to Dakota Territory twenty years earlier.

spite his cultural baggage and inclination to place people in racial categories. Relationships with individuals and new experiences opened De Smet to broader understandings of different cultures and people. Early on, he referred to Lakota medicine men as "ministers of Satan" but over time he came to recognize Lakotas as "respectful, assiduous and attentive to instruction on the holy word of God."[9] Most significantly, he was willing to learn from native people as they taught him cultural protocols, new expressions of generosity, and the importance of kinship.

De Smet's relationships with members of the Oceti Sakowin also revealed an evolution of his perspective on native people, intercultural relations, and federal policy in the 1860s. In 1864, for instance, the Jesuit questioned several western Sioux bands about their actions. He reminded them of the "mournful consequences of war and exhorted them to continue to keep the peace," warning that "terrible retribution, nothing short of utter extermination, must overtake the hostile bands, if they persist in their present reckless course of hostility to the whites."[10] A few years later, he had grown more sympathetic to tribal leaders. "One is compelled to admit," De Smet asserted, "that they [Indians] are less guilty than the whites. Nine times out of ten, the provocations come from the latter—that is to say, from the scum of civilization, who bring to them the lowest and grossest vices, and none of the virtues, of civilized men."[11] Recognizing the limited government support for tribes despite federal rhetoric, De Smet fulminated during the summer of 1867, "They ask, and have a right to demand, to have justice done to them. The practice of putting them off with fine words should cease once and for all." Such relations inspired De Smet to side with tribal communities over federal officials in certain land and sovereignty disputes.[12]

Following De Smet's passing in 1873, the mantle of leadership and initiative for Indian missionaries in the West moved to Father Martin Marty, a Swiss Benedictine who came to the United States from Einsiedeln Abbey in 1860. Marty became the first abbot at Saint Meinrad Abbey by 1871, and in that role he pushed the boundaries of monastic

9. De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels*, 2:633–35, 3:1076, 4:1213; Markowitz, *Converting the Rosebud,* pp. 206–8.

10. De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels*, 2:675–84.

11. Ibid., 3:825–26, 856.

12. Ibid., 3:874–77.

responsibilities in more evangelical directions that laid the immediate foundations for Immaculate Conception and other missions in Dakota Territory. Just a few weeks after the Battle of the Little Bighorn, in summer 1876, Marty met the noted Hunkpapa leader Sitting Bull and later visited with him several times, both in Canada and after the Lakota leader had crossed back over the border. Apparently, their relationship developed enough for Sitting Bull to provide food and protection to Marty, and he agreed to "listen to your [Marty's] words." At the same time the Hunkpapa leader remained antagonistic toward United States officials, he referred to Marty as "our good friend—a good man and a priest."[13] However, as Paul G. Monson points out in his article in this issue, these particular accounts obscure a much more complex relationship between Marty and Sitting Bull.

With these experiences as a backdrop, it is not surprising that Marty's perspective toward the bands of the Oceti Sakowin changed. The Benedictine's initial support for the removal of Sioux people to Indian Territory on the southern plains shifted toward helping them solidify their rights and longevity on the northern plains.[14] Despite the reluctance of many at Saint Meinrad to support mission work, Marty continued cultivating these relationships with visits for months at a time (up to thirteen months in one instance). With President Ulysses S. Grant's Peace Policy permitting Catholic missionaries at Standing Rock and Devil's Lake, Marty accompanied new staff he recruited to both locations. By 1880, he had enlisted fourteen Benedictines to serve at missions in Dakota Territory. When, in 1883, federal officials revoked the rule that limited one Christian denomination to each reservation, Marty began appealing to other Benedictines to serve in reservation communities at Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Crow Creek.[15] In most cas-

13. Robert F. Karolevitz, *Bishop Martin Marty: "The Black Robe Lean Chief"* (Yankton, S. Dak.: Sacred Heart Convent, 1980), pp. 67–68; Albert Kleber, O.S.B., *History of St. Meinrad Archabbey, 1854–1954* (St. Meinrad, Ind.: Grail Publications, 1954), pp. 279–80.

14. Karolevitz, *Bishop Martin Marty,* pp. 35–52.

15. Ibid., pp. 68–70; Sr. Ann Kessler, "First Catholic Bishop of Dakota: Martin Marty, 'The Black Robe Lean Chief,'" in *South Dakota Leaders: From Pierre Choteau, Jr. to Oscar Howe*, ed. Herbert T. Hoover and Larry J. Zimmerman (Vermillion: University of South Dakota Press, 1989), p. 114. For more on the Peace Policy and its related "Quaker policy" of designating certain reservations to specific religious denominations (the Quakers were the first involved), *see* Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government*

es, young monks, like Pius Boehm, ended up responding to Marty's appeal. Each arrived early enough in adulthood to experience, consider, and accept the new dimensions of their lives they would develop for decades. Many even chose to be buried on reservation land where they served significant portions of their lives.

Father Pius Boehm's experiences at Crow Creek beginning in 1887 laid a foundation for changing dynamics, perspectives, and Benedictine relationships that would grow over decades. When he arrived on 21 January 1887 in the company of the legendary Bishop Martin Marty, Boehm entered an utterly unfamiliar place. Like others who emigrated from elsewhere, he held firm to his belief system and its social hierarchies even as the new people and experiences shook his world. Having grown up in Indiana among German Catholics, Boehm found the Crow Creek Agency a brand-new experience. "They were the first Indians I had ever seen," he recalled more than thirty years later.[16]

Boehm's detailed recollection from his first meeting in the depths of winter in 1887 reveals the effect this incident had on his life. Bull Ghost, who had presented the formal petition for a Catholic mission school at Crow Creek, began with words of welcome, but what most stuck Boehm were the words that followed. "God made the earth, and all this land was made for the Indians," Standing Elk noted while gesturing with his arm across the landscape. "The white man is coming here to root up the ground. If you come for our land, we will kick you out."[17] Was it the specific statements, Standing Elk's oratorical style, or fear that lodged those words in Boehm's memory? Perhaps it was the women on their way to a beef issue who stood behind the men with large butcher knives in their belts. Regardless, Boehm reported decades later that he would "never forget the nobility of countenances of those old warriors who welcomed me to Stephan. They impressed me deeply and aroused an

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and the American Indians, abridged ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), pp. 152–64. According to Prucha, of over seventy agencies, the Catholics were originally given access to seven, with most going to different Protestant denominations.

16. Pius Boehm, O.S.B., "Reminiscences of an Indian Missionary," *Indian Sentinel* 3 (Oct. 1923): 154. Published from 1902 to 1962, the *Indian Sentinel* featured articles about Catholic missionaries, institutions they established in Indian country, and requests for financial support.

17. Duratschek, *Crusading along Sioux Trails*, pp. 165–66.

enthusiasm that would make it easy to understand the zeal of Father De Smet."[18]

Intellectual and spiritual changes for Boehm, however, were a more gradual process. As cognitive scientists have shown, our brains do not remember what we want to remember as much as those things we have thought about repeatedly. According to Daniel Willingham, in order to retain ideas, we first need to process them. "Memory is the residue of thought," Willingham claims, and for individuals to retain something in long-term memory, they must have thought about it before and processed it through working memory.[19] Thus, it seems likely that the ability to retell an experience in detail more than thirty years after the fact grew from regular remembrances in the intervening years. This principle applies to both Maudlin's memory of Clem Wounded Knee's help and Boehm's recollection of Standing Elk. Both men would retain and be affected by such experiences for decades.

Of course, it cannot be known how often Boehm thought about his initial 1887 meeting, but he must have thought about it at several points to process and retain it for decades. In an era when he and most other missionaries perceived themselves as superior to native people, the assertion by Standing Elk and the idea that he and others would be watching and monitoring him stuck in the priest's head. The Benedictine had the opportunity to revisit memories of his first meeting with Standing Elk when the Crow Creek father visited his children at school. Still, Boehm clearly retained his sense of Catholic paternalism and did not suddenly become a cultural relativist. The American Indian people Boehm met, the challenges he faced, and the opportunities that developed gradually influenced him and his successors at Stephan. As a young Benedictine monk, he had limited options to move elsewhere without the support of his abbot at Saint Meinrad. Over decades of service, however, he showed commitment to the institution and chose to remain at Stephan even after he stepped down as superior.

For Boehm, the early months and years following his memorable arrival proved particularly challenging. Weather alone was daunting,

18. Boehm, "Reminiscences of an Indian Missionary," pp. 154–55.

19. Daniel Willingham, *Why Don't Students Like School: A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How the Mind Works and What It Means for the Classroom* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2009), pp. 54–55.

with blizzard after blizzard falling upon the mission that was still only one two-story building and several smaller structures. During his first two months, storms often isolated the community and made mail delivery impossible. In some cases, snowdrifts nearly buried outbuildings to the extent that livestock had to be reached through the roofs. Boehm was not officially in charge for a few years, but his lack of preparation and his perceived inability to contribute led him to tell Marty a month after his arrival that he was "willing to surrender my services."[20] His superiors chose to stick with him even as they transferred other monks in and out during the first few years. Extreme weather, intercultural relations, problematic mission personnel, and limited finances continued to challenge him for decades. Even so, Boehm learned new skills, altered his cultural disposition, and built relationships that allowed the mission to survive and grow for decades.

Adaptation of one's cultural disposition does not happen quickly, and certainly Boehm held many of his own cultural beliefs well into his time at Stephan. His practical German disposition informed his early decisions. A rules-follower, he believed in timeliness and prioritized balanced budgets. While these traits made sense from his cultural lens, they also had the potential to conflict with certain tribal norms. Boehm's goal of timely student arrival at the beginning of the school year, for instance, was not consistent with priorities of native families who followed their own cultural traditions. Feeling unappreciated, and failing to understand intercultural experiences, he seemed to resent indigenous perceptions and values. "For the little privilege of settling down upon [their land], they expect everything of us," Boehm bemoaned. "The white man is here for their living; he has plenty [of] money and needs only to reach into his pocket and let them have it."[21] Like many priests of his day, he believed in top-down management rather than collaboration. His early journal entries suggest that he was bothered by those parents who did not simply drop off their children at school but instead wished to discuss the school operations.

20. Boehm to Marty, 23 Feb. 1887, Immaculate Conception Mission, Crow Creek and Lower Brule Agency, D.T., Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions (hereafter BCIM), Series 1, Reel 15, Marquette University Archives, Milwaukee, Wisc.

21. Boehm to Mundwiler, 21 Mar. 1887, Fintan Mundwiler Correspondence, Folder 1, Box 2, St. Meinrad Monks: Personal Records and Papers (hereafter SMMPRP): Pius Boehm, St. Meinrad Archabbey Archives, St. Meinrad, Ind. (hereafter SMAA).

Catholic leaders who had served previously on the northern plains helped Boehm learn to reach out to federal officials and native communities. Marty advised him to seek support from the federal agent at Fort Thompson, who was required to supply food and clothing to Crow Creek students, including those who attended the mission school. Catholic leaders also encouraged the priest to meet Indian families.[22] Initially, Boehm turned to mission neighbor Sarah LaCroix and her family, whose land was just east of Stephan. She not only provided food and cultural understanding of Dakota people but also enrolled her children and grandchildren at the mission school.[23]

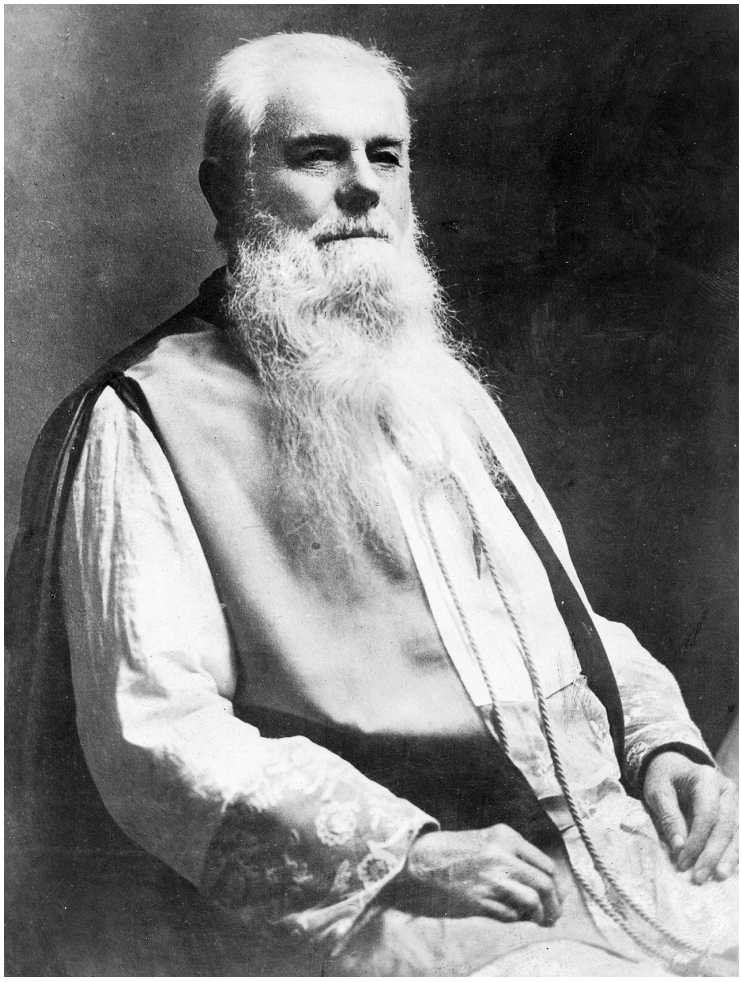
Whether or not Boehm recognized it, native families supported and provided examples of cross-cultural collaboration that could serve as models for missionaries. At the beginning of the 1887 school year, Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions director Father Joseph A. Stephan (namesake of the mission) instructed Boehm to host an opening feast to welcome children and their families. "Please tell the Indians that I will give them a feast, especially those who send their children to our school," Stephan wrote in September of the first academic year. "We will kill a steer for them and I shall bring sugar, coffee, crakers [*sic*] or flour and tobacco for them from Highmore."[24] This welcoming event would continue for years. In September 1893, Boehm estimated families had put up thirty-five lodges near the mission for several days during which they participated in Catholic and traditional rituals. "Many noble red men and woman [attended] the 10 o'clock service," he noted, while also "singing into the night in their camps."[25] Ultimately, Boehm

22. Willard to Boehm, 27 Jan. 1887, and Stephan to Boehm, 16 Mar. 1887, both in Folder 5, Box 19, Parishes, Missions, and Chaplaincies, Stephan (hereafter PMC, Stephan), SMAA; Marty to Boehm, 16 Feb. 1887, Letters, Marty to Boehm, 1887–96, Shelf 1, Box 2, ibid.

23. Boehm to T. J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 31 Aug. 1890, Immaculate Conception Mission, Crow Creek and Lower Brule Agency, S.Dak., BCIM, Series 1, Reel 20. According to "Council at Crow Creek," 1908, Central Classified Files (CCF), 1907–1939, Crow Creek, Decimal 56, Box 6, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Record Group (RG) 75, National Archives (NA), Washington, D.C., Sarah Wells LaCroix was born 19 Sept. 1834 at Fort Snelling, Territory of Wisconsin, she married Joseph LaCroix on 20 June 1868. They had three children Joseph N. LaCroix, Jennie LaCroix Douglas, Charles A. LaCroix.

24. Stephan to Boehm, 22 Sept. 1887, Folder 5, Box 19, PMC, Stephan.

25. Pius Boehm Diary, 17–26 Sept. 1893, Shelf C29, Box 76, Blue Cloud Abbey Collection, Swiss Congregation Archives, SMAA. This multivolume journal includes daily entries, sometimes written by someone else, from the 1880s to the 1930s.



The mission on Crow Creek is sometimes known as Stephan Mission for Joseph A. Stephan, director of the Catholic Board of Indian Missions in the 1880s.

learned that he could support the school best if he served as an intermediary between native families, federal agents, and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions.

While balance between tribal support, Catholic leadership, and government funding proved necessary, Boehm focused on the federal contract and the financial resources that came along with it. By 1 July 1887, the bureau had secured a federal contract to "maintain an Indian board-

ing school at the Crow Creek Reservation, Dakota" for between fifty and sixty-three students for twelve months. The priest was attentive to enrolling students to fulfill the federal requirements. After all, each student's attendance for a quarter earned the mission twenty-seven dollars, and Stephan could receive up to fifty-four hundred dollars for full compliance.[26] This process and the need to grow enrollment made the priest nervous and perhaps too focused on numbers (and student arrival dates), while families gave their seasonal activities and children's welfare higher priority.

Over time, Boehm learned that only with support from tribal leaders would the school attract enough students to meet their contract obligations. Allies like Bull Ghost certainly helped, but when the Benedictine learned that only four of eleven band leaders supported the mission, he recognized the need to cultivate others. Some combination of changing circumstance and increased familiarity with the school led additional tribal leaders to support it. Some parents, particularly those with Catholic backgrounds, even brought their children long distances to attend Stephan.[27] On 12 April 1889, Boehm reported a petition signed by fifty tribal leaders, including Bull Ghost, that requested a Catholic priest be appointed as the new Crow Creek agent. By that point, eight of eleven headmen, including White Ghost the "chief of chiefs," supported the mission. While federal officials did not ultimately appoint a Catholic agent, Bull Ghost continued to solicit tribal leaders to support the school.[28] From five boys in attendance in winter 1887, Stephan enrolled forty-five students for the 1889–1890 school year.[29]

Boehm also leaned heavily on Catholic sources to fund the school, and Mother Katharine Drexel proved the most significant for the first few decades. A philanthropist and founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Drexel supported numerous missions on the northern plains, enabling the survival of Stephan and other Catholic missions.[30]

26. Treasury Department Memorandum, 14 Apr. 1888, Immaculate Conception Mission, Crow Creek and Lower Brule Agency, D.T., BCIM, Series 1, Reel 16.

27. Steven Stenger to Stephan, 2 Feb. 1889, Immaculate Conception Mission, Crow Creek and Lower Brule Agency, S.Dak., ibid., Reel 17.

28. Boehm to Stephan, 12 Apr. 1889, ibid.

29. Duratschek, *Crusading along Sioux Trails*, p. 169.

30. Drexel, heir to the Drexel-Morgan banking fortune, founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in 1891. Members of the order focused their work on meeting the needs

Support from Bull Ghost played a central role in increasing student enrollments at Immaculate Conception.

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of African American and American Indian communities. Marty helped secure Drexel's initial investment of fifteen thousand dollars by 1887. In South Dakota, she also supported Holy Rosary Mission at Pine Ridge and Saint Francis Mission on the Rosebud reservation. Drexel was canonized a saint in 2000. Ibid., p. 127.

After she attended the first school feast in September 1887, Boehm kept in contact with Drexel. He wisely promoted letter writing between his students and the reverend mother, sustaining her deep concern and financial support for the students she met in person and through correspondence. Boehm got some solid support from Sister Clementine Brown, who wrote regularly to Drexel as well. Brown's letters revealed the challenging conditions, her commitment to work with Indian children, and the student success that Drexel's support made possible. After receiving one batch of student letters, Drexel noted that hearing from the children "cheered me, [and] filled me with hope for a happy future for Im. Con. Mission."[31] When federal officials withdrew nearly all support for parochial schools in the late 1890s, partly due to concerns over the separation of church and state, Drexel's support became even more essential.

After 1900, Boehm gave significant attention to a new federal policy regarding the use of treaty funds to support Indian education. Particulars of the policy changed during the early decades of the twentieth century and required that Stephan staff engage further with families. Individual tribal members needed to sign petitions to permit the use of tribal funds to support schools like Stephan. "The work of these devoted Fathers and Sisters has been of the greatest benefit to us and to our children," the petition stated, "and we most earnestly desire to have them continue among us." The petition signers ultimately requested that the commissioner of Indian affairs make "use of our funds, a sufficient amount to pay for the care and education of all our children who may attend said mission."[32] Not all tribal members supported this effort, and some even outwardly opposed it with a counter petition, so Boehm and his staff learned to appeal directly to particular families.[33] Dependent on such funds, they traveled many miles to secure addition-

31. Drexel to Mundwiler, 5 July [1888?], Mundwiler Correspondence, Folder 1, Box 2, SMMPRP: Pius Boehm, SMAA.

32. Petition to Hon. W. A. Jones, Crow Creek Agency, June 1904, Immaculate Conception Mission, Crow Creek and Old Winnebago Reservation, S.Dak., BCIM, Series 1, Reel 33.

33. A 1904 petition from non-Catholics at Crow Creek noted that "we most strongly object to the use of our share of tribal funds for the support of Roman Catholic Schools." *See Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Indian Rights Association, for the Year Ending December 31, 1904* (Philadelphia: Office of Indian Rights Association, 1905), p. 7.

al signatures. Results varied from contract to contract, but typically tribal signatures would bring in thousands of dollars per year. For fiscal year 1905, for instance, tribal signatures earned Stephan Mission more than seven thousand dollars.[34]

Financial matters dominate archival evidence about Boehm, but analysis of the more personal thoughts in his journal reveals a growing appreciation for his students and experiences at Stephan. Within his first few years, he even began to admit to a certain enjoyment of the students. "I am beginning to like them myself," he conceded to Katharine Drexel in a winter 1889 letter.[35] More notable in his journal than in letters to Catholic leaders are references to students' particular contributions to the mission community. Among other things, he noted annual student potato picking and other work that put food on the table; older boys missing days of school to haul coal from railcars at the Highmore train station to provide heat for the mission; and quick student responses to the fires that too frequently attacked the wooden structures. Boehm had changed from a priest who doubted the abilities of his students just a few years earlier to one who began to question whether the mission would survive without their contributions.

Beyond recognizing their work, Boehm increasingly noted enjoyable times with students and staff at Stephan. Students brought positive energy and varied experiences to life at the mission. He recorded walking to mission land claims with students, fishing in nearby lakes with them, bicycle riding with alumni in the summer, and late nights working with students and staff to prepare mailings to send out to donors. In the 1890s, Boehm even helped form a student and staff band that performed in central South Dakota towns. When boys' and girls' bands performed for a feast day or other holiday, students and staff enjoyed themselves. "Fr. Pius was much amused," one staff member noted after a concert, writing that the priest laughed "so that he could scarce find time to smoke" his cigar. Throughout the journal, Boehm frequent-

34. For fiscal year 1905, the BCIM contracted with Stephan for sixty-five students at $108 per student per year for $7,020. *See Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1905, p. 37; *Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Indian Rights Association*, p. 7.

35. Boehm to Drexel, 15 Feb. 1889, Drexel Correspondence, Folder 3, Box 1, SMMPRP: Pius Boehm, SMAA.

ly shifted from a hierarchical style to use kinship terms, referring to himself as "Pa." He also confessed to students nudging him enough to grant "free days" from schoolwork and support for the end-of-year picnic. Certainly, Boehm had less contact with students than the Benedictine sisters did, but even he confessed that "loneliness crept in" when students left at the end of the year.[36]

Over time, Boehm's questions regarding the purpose of the fledgling institution were replaced by greater conviction regarding the need for the Immaculate Conception mission school. When financial support reached its lowest point near the turn of the twentieth century, he pleaded to his superiors, "Don't abandon Stephan."[37] Meeting families at mass or when they delivered their children to school must have helped to humanize native people to him. As he cheered on school baseball teams and saw children return year after year, he witnessed how Catholic leaders and the Crow Creek community made common cause.[38] When parents arrived with beds and bedding from their own homes following the 1916 fire that nearly burned down the entire mission, Boehm's optimism grew further. "I never thought that the Indians care so much for their school," the Benedictine remarked. "The question of rebuilding is no longer open, we simply have to rebuild. God wills it."[39]

Boehm's missionary experiences attracted three nephews from the Holtzman side of his family to the area. As they blended into the regional community, their lives too would be changed. Albert Holtzman arrived in 1906, established a general merchandise store at Stephan, purchased land adjacent to the mission, and established a successful ranching business. Alphonse Holtzmann arrived from Indiana in 1910, worked at the mission, married former Stephan student Lona St. Pierre, and then ran a bakery in Highmore for fifteen years. When the Great Depression hit, Alphonse took on several jobs before moving his family

36. Boehm Diary, 6–7 Dec. 1892.

37. Boehm to Abbot Athanasius Schmitt, 1 Feb. 1901, Schmitt Correspondence, Folder 1, Box 3, SMMPRP: Pius Boehm, SMAA. Schmitt served as abbot at Saint Meinrad from 1898 to 1930.

38. For more on this theme, *see* Robert W. Galler, "Making Common Cause" *Ethnohistory* 55 (Winter 2008): 439–64.

39. Boehm to Ketcham, 24 Jan. 1916, Immaculate Conception Mission, Crow Creek and Old Winnebago Reservation, S.Dak., BCIM, Series 1, Reel 77.

to Saint Paul's Indian Mission in Yankton, where he worked as the baker for that school. Victor came to Highmore in the 1920s, ran a liquor store, and raised a family in the area. Ultimately, Boehm's commitment to the school and region led his family to bury him with a prominent gravestone at Stephan. The Holtzman name remains in the area with the descendants of Boehm nephews.[40]

Like Boehm, Ambrose Mattingly (1865–1941) grew up in Indiana, entered Saint Meinrad as a young man, and knew mostly a monastic life prior to moving west.[41] Mattingly arrived at Stephan in the fall of 1888, and during his first year, he not only took on the role of principal, teacher, and boys' prefect but also completed his theological studies in preparation for the priesthood. At Crow Creek, he took on two new names: "Father" when he was ordained in June 1889 and Hokshena Peshto ("Sharp Boy") when Wounded Knee gave him that name based on his sharp features. The community support for the mission inspired him. "Thirty or forty Indian families have struck up their tipis about 300 yards from the house," the twenty-three-year-old monk told Boehm in fall 1888. "They are engaged in hauling the building materials for the new house."[42] Mattingly's growing connections to the community were threatened, however, when after less than ten years of service at Stephan, his abbot transferred him away to Jasper College in Indiana. The timing could not have been worse, for the mission had just suffered great losses with a 30 October 1895 fire.[43]

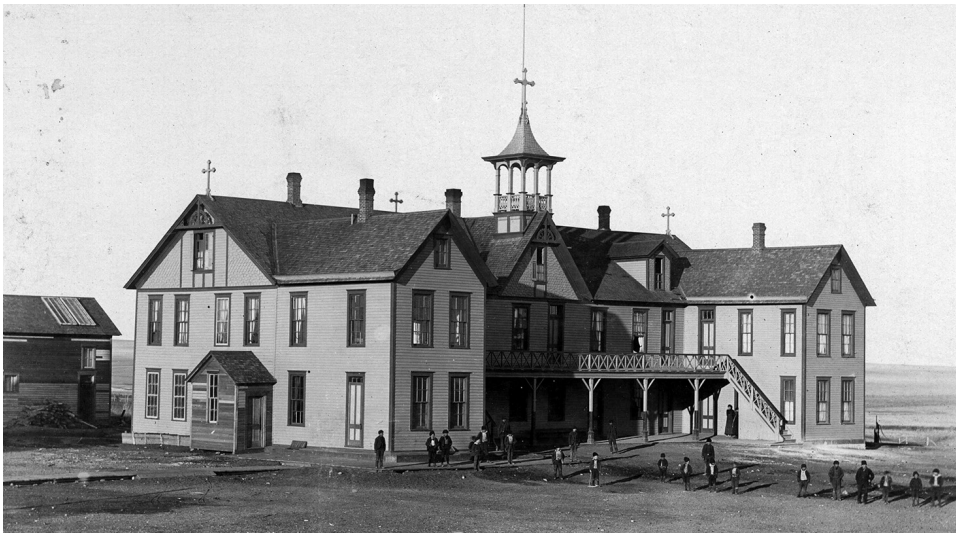
Mattingly and Boehm, initially hesitant about missionary life, became strong advocates through such adversity. Boehm pushed his abbot for Mattingly's return. Mattingly was valuable to the mission and

40. *See* "In Celebration of the Holzmann Family Journey from Alsace to America, 1672–1994," ed. Jerome Holtzmann, in author's possession. *See also* "Chronicle," *Little Monitor of the Sacred Heart* (Stephan, S.Dak.), Mar. 1917, pp. 7–8.

41. Born in Eureka, Indiana, Mattingly served as a missionary for fifty-two years at Stephan, Fort Totten, and Marty, according to Sr. Claudia Duratscheck, *Under the Shadow of His Wings: History of Sacred Heart Convent of Benedictine Sisters, Yankton, South Dakota, 1880–1970* (Aberdeen, S.Dak.: North Plains Press, 1971), p. 93.

42. Ambrose Mattingly to Abbot Fintan, 22 Sept. 1888, Folder 1, Box 3, Deceased and Former St. Meinrad Monks: Personal Records and Papers (hereafter DFSMM): Ambrose Mattingly, SMAA.

43. "Immaculate Conception Indian Mission, South Dakota," *Indian Sentinel* 1 (Apr. 1917): 10–11; Boehm to Stephan, 23 June 1896, Immaculate Conception Mission, Crow Creek and Lower Brule Agency, S.Dak., BCIM, Series 1, Reel 25.



This building, which served as the main schoolhouse for Immaculate Conception, burned down in the fire on 30 October 1895.

the Dakota community within which he worked. As Boehm stated, "The Indians know F. Ambrose and they have a holy respect for him."[44] Teaching math at an Indiana college might have been seen as a promotion, but Mattingly wanted to return to Crow Creek. By May 1896, either letters from Boehm and Mattingly, or a sudden change of heart by the abbot, allowed Mattingly to return for what would end up being another two decades. Putting behind him the many early struggles at Stephan, he considered it "a privilege to continue working among the Indians."[45]

Mattingly recommitted to working at Crow Creek as soon as he returned. He learned the Dakota language well enough to give his first sermon in Dakota in 1897, regularly met with families, and worked on tribal matters. He learned photography and took hundreds of images of Crow Creek families that prove invaluable today.[46] In his travels between Crow Creek, Lower Brule, and Yankton mission stations, he met

44. Boehm to Mundwiler, 30 Sept. 1895, Folder 1, Box 3, DSFMM: Ambrose Mattingly.

45. Mattingly to Abbot, 31 May–1 June 1896, ibid.

46. Mattingly et al., *Impressions of Tribal Life: The Reverend Ambrose Mattingly Photographic Collection* (Rochester, N.Y.: Eastman Kodak Co., 2007). *See also* www2.usgs.gov/features/native_americans.html.

Ambrose Mattingly, pictured here in 1910, took on numerous roles at the mission and spent most of his life as an integral part of the community there.

with Catholic catechists and stayed overnight with them and their families. His friendships with Gregory Seeking Land, Moses St. John, Frank Black, Walking Crane, Joe All Around, Benedict Wind, and others created links between the Crow Creek reservation and Stephan Mission that continued into second and third generations.[47]

Like Boehm, Mattingly maintained a strong Catholic disposition even as native families often practiced some form of cultural syncretism. He promoted Catholicism and fretted over the influence of Protestantism and the persistence of certain tribal religious traditions. His commitment to his flock, however, could not be questioned, particularly when considering the efforts he made to meet his congregations and visit those in need. In fact, in January 1914, he tried to cross the Missouri River to visit a family, as he had done many times before, and nearly lost his life when he broke through the ice. His team of horses drowned, but Mattingly managed to escape his buggy and get to dry land, only to have to walk six miles home.[48]

Over time, tribal leaders reached out to Mattingly for assistance with political matters and tribal land claims. Like De Smet and others before him, he stood with tribal leaders in opposition to past federal policy. When Bull Ghost and Wooden Horn came to him in 1902, he helped them contact federal officials and establish a petition pertaining to the return of their ancestral land, a process that would continue for more than a decade.[49] Having arrived with the wave of American settlers occupying Dakota lands, the Benedictine priest now served as an ally in defense of tribal lands. Mattingly frequently attended council meetings, helped draft letters to the commissioner of Indian affairs, and spoke in support of their land rights.

In winter 1914, for instance, Bull Ghost's band approached Mattingly to help them address land issues north of Crow Creek near the Standing Rock Agency. They requested that the priest provide a typewritten letter that laid out their concerns and desire to speak with federal officials in Washington. Mattingly informed federal officials that the "Bull Ghost

47. Mattingly to Father Sylvester Eisenman, 8 Jan., 11 Mar. 1919, Father Ambrose Mattingly Letters (Stephan), 1891–1919, Blue Cloud Abbey Collection.

48. "The Month of January," *Little Monitor of the Sacred Heart*, Mar. 1916, p. 12.

49. Boehm Diary, 11 Nov. 1902; "Statements by Crow Creek Delegation," 16 Mar. 1916, CCF, 1907–1939, Crow Creek, Decimal 56, Box 6.

band of the Yanktonai Hunkpati Indians has elected as delegates to visit the Indian Office at Washington the following two men, Wounded Knee and Medicine Crow." In the process, the Benedictine priest helped them assert that soldiers had taken their land by force, whites had killed Bull Ghost's brother, and band members had never consented to a land sale. Even more proactive for native people than the legendary Jesuit Father De Smet, Mattingly sided with native people in land disputes just as Benedictines who followed him would lend assistance with the Black Hills land case that developed in the following decade.[50]

Mattingly also developed relationships with families beyond political matters. He visited with Bull Ghost on his deathbed, writing that the tribal leader continued to pride himself for his involvement in the founding of Immaculate Conception mission.[51] Even after being relocated to North Dakota during World War I, Mattingly maintained the friendships that had developed at Crow Creek and Lower Brule reservations. His commitment included an emergency trip to visit with Boehm during the influenza outbreak after World War I, attending ceremonies and funerals, and regularly reconnecting with families at the Catholic Indian congresses.[52] When the mission at Stephan hosted the Catholic Congress in summer 1934, Mattingly had the opportunity to talk with his former catechists and mission personnel he had known for decades. The priest may have moved on by then, but the effect of his relationships at Stephan remained.

Father Sylvester Eisenman (1891–1948) replaced Mattingly at Stephan toward the end of World War I and subsequently connected with several Oceti Sakowin communities along the Missouri River. Similar to Boehm and Mattingly, Saint Meinrad leaders sent Eisenman to a place new to him where he shed some of his German traditions while retaining others. His missionary travels taught Eisenman to negotiate challenging cultural and physical terrain while visits to Yankton drew him

50. Ambrose Mattingly statements, 20 Feb., 31 Mar. 1914, Crow Creek, Folders 1 & 2, Box 93, BIA, RG 75, NA, Kansas City. De Smet participated in numerous treaty negotiations, including the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868.

51. Boehm to Rev. W. H. Hughes, Director, BCIM, 12 Aug. 1923, Pius Boehm Letters, Blue Cloud Abbey Collection.

52. Beginning in the 1890s, Catholics from reservations in North Dakota and South Dakota gathered at these annual summer gatherings held at various communities. Duratschek, *Crusading along Sioux Trails*, pp. 99–100.

into that community. Eisenman's efforts there in particular earned him the respect of Yankton Indian leaders, who eventually traveled to Indiana to request from his Saint Meinrad superiors that he be named their full-time priest. Their insistence led Benedictine leaders to transfer Eisenman to Yankton, where he remained for decades. His paternalistic demeanor persisted, but he became a key part of the Catholic community there.[53]

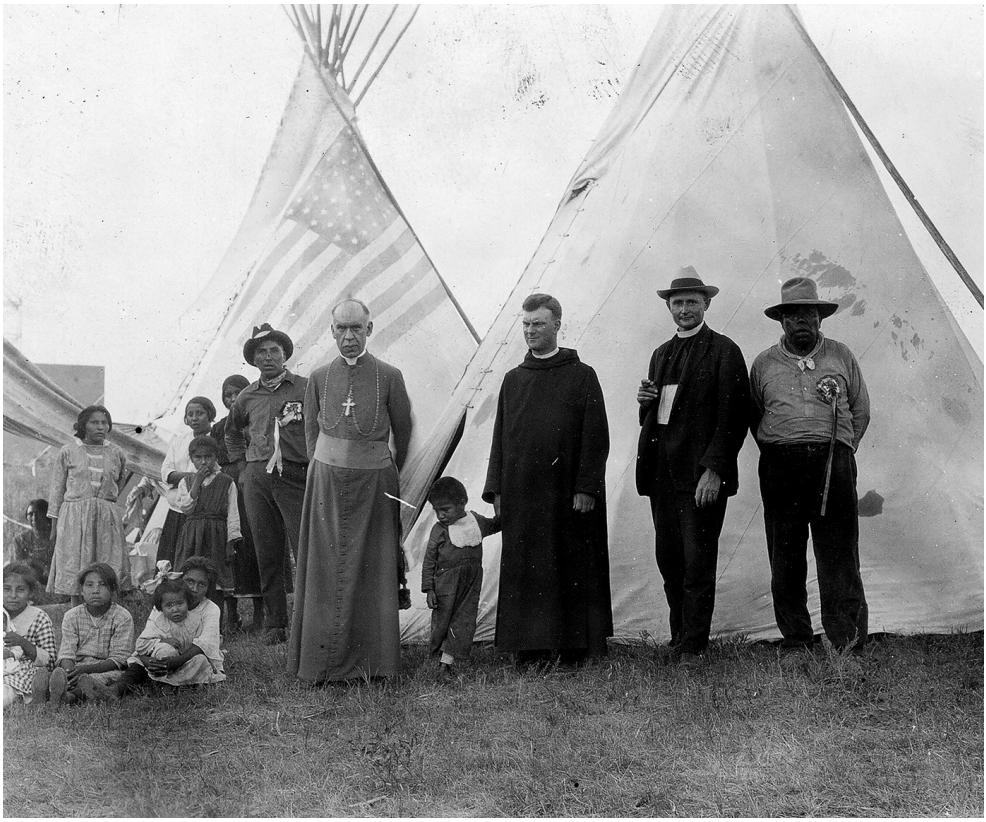
By fall 1921, Father Justin Snyder (1896–1956) arrived from Saint Meinrad to work with Boehm, now in his fifth decade at Crow Creek. With only a few years as a priest, Snyder was in a challenging position, taking on Eisenman's duties while also living under the shadow of Boehm. By Thanksgiving of Snyder's first academic year, Boehm stepped down as principal. Snyder took on that role and then within a few more years became mission superior. As Father Stanislaus Maudlin noted many years later, institutional leadership did not come easily to a man who was more comfortable with friendly conversation than authoritative decision making. Thrust into this position, Snyder developed his own manner of running the mission in changing times. He expanded the mission as the student body increased, rose to numerous national and local challenges, and grew to see himself forever changed by his decades at Stephan.[54]

Just as Standing Elk had suggested that Boehm intended to take tribal land, records show that Snyder faced a similar challenge in his early years. Immaculate Conception mission had acquired adjacent lands through the Homestead Act, allotment programs, and competency commissions.[55] A parent of a Crow Creek student, Frank Fogg, paid particular attention to developments at the mission, surely including

53. For more on Eisenman, *see* Mary Eisenman Carson, *Blackrobe for the Yankton Sioux: Fr. Sylvester Eisenman, O.S.B.* (Chamberlain, S.Dak.: Tipi Press, 1989). A more critical portrayal can be found in Gerald Wolff, "Father Sylvester Eisenman and Marty Mission," *South Dakota History* 5 (Fall 1975): 360–89.

54. Duratschek, *Crusading along Sioux Trails,* p. 182; Maudlin, oral diary, 4 Dec. 1977.

55. Non-Indians have used numerous methods to gain access to land in the West. When federal officials secured what they saw as legal control through treaty negotiations, they gained land to support settler colonialism. Allotment programs broke up tribal lands into smaller sections, typically 160 acres, and once these were distributed to native families, the remainder was declared "surplus" and sold to non-Indians. Through legal and often unscrupulous practices, federal agents could declare tribal land owners "competent" to



Sylvester Eisenman (holding child's hand) appears here with Bishop Bernard Joseph Mahoney (left, wearing cross) and William Huger (standing next to Eisenman) at a Catholic Sioux Congress in 1923.

the ranch Boehm's nephew operated on land surrounding the mission. He had also questioned Boehm about his daughter's treatment by one of the sisters who seemed to display more forceful discipline than seemed appropriate.[56] When Snyder took over for Boehm, Fogg wrote up a petition questioning mission land claims. Other mission neighbors like Wounded Knee disagreed, and residents had their names removed from

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control their own land and then pressure them to relinquish title when financial pressures or family needs forced them to sell. *See* Janet A. McDonnell, *The Dispossession of the American Indian, 1887–1934* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

56. Boehm to Supt. Marble, 5 Mar. 1921, Folder 10, Box 90, RG 75, NA, Kansas City.

the petition, but Fogg's act showed Snyder that tribal members paid attention to the mission's activities.[57]

In the complexities of 1920s intercultural relations, Snyder and the mission at Stephan could be critiqued by some native leaders at the same time others turned to the mission as an ally. Like Boehm and Mattingly, Snyder continued to side with Crow Creek families and other native people in disputes with the federal government. In 1923, for instance, attorneys for the Sioux contacted the Crow Creek tribal council as well as Boehm and Snyder at Stephan. The attorneys wanted assistance in bringing suit against the federal government, and Catholic leaders at the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions encouraged support due to the "benefits that will come to the Sioux Indians directly" as well as "our missions indirectly from a successful prosecution of these claims."[58]

Snyder also learned to cope with challenges brought on by the natural world, particularly on 14 June 1924 when a tornado hit the mission. While all were glad that students had left a few days earlier, the twenty-minute storm destroyed the twenty-four-year-old church and half of the other buildings, resulting in damages of about thirty-five thousand dollars.[59] Fund-raising projects had proven largely successful in supporting mission needs, but the tragic storm forced Snyder to expand on Boehm's more conservative approaches. Using individual letters, mass intentions, broad appeals, visitations, and other connections, Snyder grew this arm of the mission. Donations increased through the 1920s, such that the "campaign" operations supported the construction of a new building next to the rectory for a post office and the fund-raising operation itself. With this function in place, the mission was in a position to meet the growing needs of families looking for help to support their children during the depression years.[60] From just over

57. Frank Fogg to Peter Norbeck, 14 Aug., 5, 29 Dec. 1922, Superintendent to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 31 Jan. 1923, Crow Creek, all in Education-Schools, Box 89, ibid.

58. Attorneys for the Sioux Nation to Secretary of Tribal Council, Crow Creek Reservation, S.Dak., and to Rev. Pius Boehm and Rev Justin Snyder, Immaculate Conception Mission, 17 Feb. 1923, all in Folder 6, Box 20, PMC, Stephan.

59. Boehm Diary, noted in Duratschek, *Crusading along Sioux Trails*, p. 182; Justin Snyder, O.S.B., "A Call to Arms," *Indian Sentinel* 5 (Summer 1925): 128; Pius Boehm, "The Infant Savior's Toys," *Indian Sentinel* 4 (Oct. 1924): 178–79.

60. As Brenda J. Child and other scholars have noted, the economic decline of the late 1920s and into the Great Depression often found families seeking safe haven and support

60 students in the early 1920s to 160 by the end of the decade, the school became home to a growing student body from across the Dakotas.[61]

Snyder also learned to work within emerging state and national political systems, a skill set vastly different from that provided by his Benedictine training at Saint Meinrad. When the State of South Dakota questioned the Stephan mission's tax-exempt status, he appealed to the state's attorney and chairman of the subcommittee on Indian affairs. Demonstrating newly developed legal skills, he argued that not only did the mission not profit from its lands at Crow Creek, it actually saved taxpayers seventeen thousand dollars per year by educating South Dakota students at the mission instead of in publicly funded schools.[62]

Snyder also learned to work within and gain support from various New Deal programs. Throughout the 1930s, he and his hired farmer J. J. Van Balen learned varied dimensions of the Agricultural Adjustment Act to gain federal support to reduce cultivation of soil-depleting crops. In 1934, Snyder helped push a Civil Works Administration program to complete a dam east of the mission that created a body of water he named "Lake Boehm." Emboldened by these successes, he also served on a committee that promoted the extension of South Dakota Highway 34 that soon connected the area to the state capital at Pierre.[63]

Circumstances also led Snyder increasingly to recognize the contributions of the Benedictine sisters to Stephan mission. A patriarchal church might naturally focus on the importance of priests, but on the local level priests also learned of the individual contributions and sacrifices made by the sisters. While lay worker Mildred Schuster helped Snyder considerably in the mission office, he recognized Sister Edith's patience and willingness to collaborate with students in the early years

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for their children at boarding schools. *See* Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), especially chapter two.

61. Boehm, "Infant Savior's Toys," pp. 178–79; Snyder, "Call to Arms," p. 128.

62. Snyder to Hon. Fred B. Wimans, State Attorney, 21 July 1932, and Snyder to Hon. Frederick Steiwer, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs, 21 July 1932, both in Abbatial File of St. Meinrad Monks, Series 1, Justin Snyder, Folder 1, Box 22, SMAA.

63. Snyder to Esser, 27 Jan., 9 Apr. 1934, 6 Mar. 1935, all ibid., Folder 2, Box 22; Florence Keeble and Frances Block, "Fun," *Mission Echoes*, 5 Oct. 1935. For more on Van Balen, *see* Betty Jean Van Balen Ankrum, *Raized on the Rez: Views, Visions and Wisdom in the West* (Freeman, S.Dak.: Pine Hill Press, 1996).

of the Great Depression, adding, "We are all glad to note that the boys like her."[64]

Mother Jerome Schmitt, from Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton made sure that Snyder not only knew of the sisters' contributions but also understood the sacrifices they made on a daily basis. Trying to keep the nuns' workload in check, she told the priest that her sisters needed "some semblance of religious life" to "lay claim to be Benedictines at all." As she shared concerns, Snyder came to recognize the range of experiences and perspectives of the sisters who worked at Stephan. "You see the outside, and no doubt the Sisters do their utmost to preserve order and discipline," Schmitt told Snyder, "but I happen to know how many heartaches and sacrifices and self-denials this order is observed."[65]

Over time and with experience, Snyder also learned about the challenges his students, and many native people generally, faced on a day-to-day basis when interacting within the nonnative world in South Dakota. Mission literature frequently noted efforts to prove the abilities of students to succeed off reservation lands. When he joined one group on a one-hundred-mile trip east to Mitchell to compete in an oratory contest in 1932, Snyder began to recognize the discriminatory practices they experienced. Although several earned awards, Snyder believed they deserved higher commendations. "I could sense an attitude among contest officials that we were merely tolerated," Snyder commented in a letter to his abbot.[66]

Snyder had not only learned the history of his institution over more than a decade, but he helped to promote its identity upon its golden anniversary. In 1937, he wrote a play, "The Trail of Fifty Years," to celebrate the mission's first five decades. His selective portrayal of mission history, typical for the day, highlighted Benedictine monks and sisters. However, although Pius Boehm had a prominent role, so did Bull Ghost for his continued support for the school. During the play's spring 1937 performance, native students played the roles of prominent alumni and

64. Snyder to Mother Jerome Schmitt, 20 Sept. 1932, Stephan Mission Correspondence File, Sacred Heart Monastery Archives, Yankton, S.Dak. Maudlin noted, years later, the significance of women as assistants to Benedictine priests in Maudlin, oral diary, 4 Dec. 1977.

65. Mother Jerome to Snyder, 8 Aug. 1938, Stephan Mission Correspondence File.

66. Snyder to Esser, 26 Apr. 1932, Abbatial File of St. Meinrad Monks, Series 1, Justin Snyder, Folder 1, Box 22.

relatives such as Clem Wounded Knee, Lucy Sargent, and Leo Walking Crane. National histories of the West might leave out native people, but Snyder recognized their contributions.[67]

By the time Snyder left the mission for medical reasons during World War II, students, staff, and he himself had changed. After two decades at Stephan, he highlighted the love and admiration he developed for the land and people at the mission:

> Three years after my ordination I was sent to the Indians. Since then all my years have been with the Indians and the Indian children, and I am glad that it was so/ I love to be with them; I love the prairies in their every mood: Their lush, green, expansive joyfulness in spring, their sunbaked aridity of fall, the exuberant snow-blown winter; I love the turbulent Missouri River between the mountainous palisades that guide on its way, the buttes, the draws, the winding trails, but all this is but the background to the real love, that of the Indians and Indian children. I have tried, in my little way, to make this people my people, and my God their God.[68]

Like Pius Boehm, Justin Snyder chose to spend his last days at Stephan and was buried alongside Boehm behind the mission church.

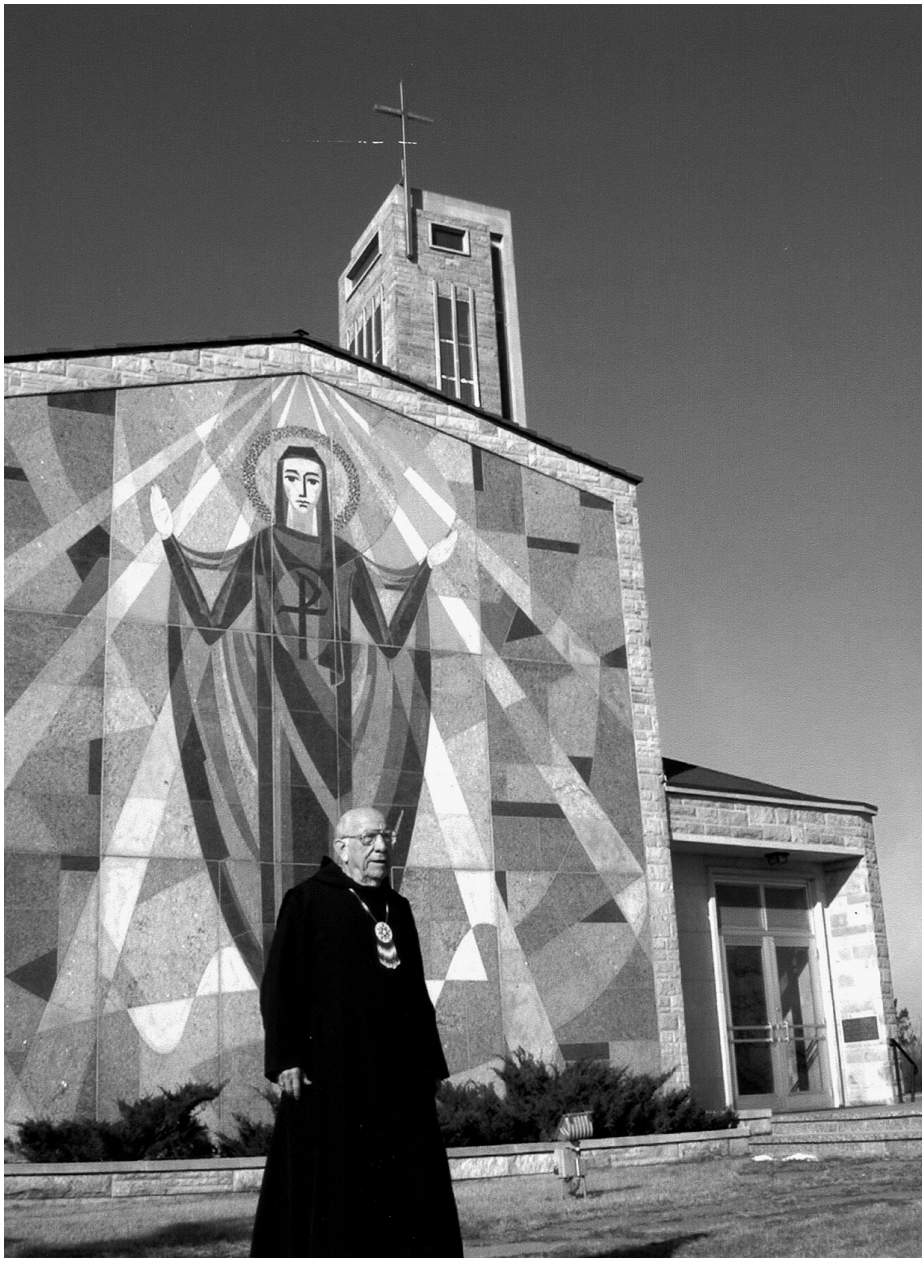
Catholic priests at Stephan Mission experienced more religious and cultural transformations after World War II. Priests who arrived in the war years learned how to serve in a new cultural setting, and many over time came to question basic precepts and traditions of missionizing in Indian country. This new generation of priests ultimately served in leadership roles in the post–Vatican II era. Consistent with the Catholic Church's reversing of rituals and power dynamics toward the laity in the later 1960s, Catholic missionaries began to cede more influence of their churches and schools to native families by the 1970s.[69]

One of the priests who arrived during Snyder's last few years as mission superior was the affable Father Stanislaus Maudlin (1916–2006).

67. Justin Snyder, O.S.B., *The Trail of Fifty Years* (St. Meinrad, Ind.: Grail Press, 1937).

68. Sr. M. Marmion Maiers, "The History of Immaculate Conception Indian Mission, Stephan, South Dakota, 1886–1961" (master's thesis, University of South Dakota, 1961), p. 56; *Wopeedah*, Apr. 1943.

69. For more on native people and Catholicism in the post–World War II era, *see* Christopher Vecsey, *Where the Two Roads Meet*, American Indian Catholics, vol. 3 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999).



Stanislaus Maudlin began serving at Stephan Mission in 1939 and went on to play a vital role in collecting resources on American Indian cultures on the northern plains.

When he came to Stephan in 1939 after being forced to leave Italy due to the onset of World War II, he supervised the boys before being relocated to work at the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation. After serving in North Dakota and South Dakota for decades, Maudlin began to record taped conversations and reminiscences of his missionary years. His statements reveal the change of Benedictine perspectives in the twentieth century. Like others of his generation, he noted the significance of Stephan graduates in contemporary society, the influence of native people on Christianity, and some negative consequences of boarding schools. Maudlin embraced his decades of living in Indian communities. He noted with pride his Dakota name Wambdi Wicasa, meaning "Eagle Man," and learned much from the people he met. Indeed, it had been Crow Creek tribal member Clem Wounded Knee (whose father gave Ambrose Mattingly his Dakota name) who showed the Benedictine priest the essence of his own religious traditions with his inquiry, "Father, don't you know that God is nice?"[70]

Maudlin's experiences also prompted him to rethink and critique some of his predecessors' work and to try to undo the cultural losses within Indian country. Native families suffered the negative consequences of children attending school away from their families. "We missionaries, in our zeal and with good intentions," the priest noted decades later, "broke up families."[71] Catholic leaders also began to recognize the merits of tribal history and traditions in an age of greater respect for cultural pluralism. Maudlin and others embraced these ideas and tried to help individuals retain connections to family histories through the collection of family photographs and construction of family trees. By the early 1950s, he and other Benedictines founded a new abbey in northeastern South Dakota, geographically closer to reservation communities in which they served. Named after Yankton leader Blue Cloud, the Catholic monastery increasingly connected with native people and focused on gathering resources to learn about tribal cultures. By the late 1960s, as the cultural renaissance grew across Indian country, Maudlin established the American Indian Cultural Research

70. Maiers, "History of Immaculate Conception Indian Mission," p. 61; Maudlin, oral diary, 12 Nov. 1977, AIRP 1522; 26–28 Nov. 1977, AIRP 1526, 5 Dec. 1977, AIRP 1530.

71. Maudlin, oral diary, 4 Dec. 1977.

Center, devoted to the study of native histories and traditions, within the monastery.[72]

By the early 1970s, Benedictine leaders at Blue Cloud Abbey not only supported the study of native histories and cultures but began the process of turning their schools over to local communities. "We monks at Blue Cloud Abbey made the determination that after over almost a hundred years of serving on the reservations as educators," Maudlin observed, "it was now our duty to put into the hands of the parents all of the administration and the ownership and the future direction of the schools that were there." In contrast to his predecessors who seemed to hold a sense of cultural superiority, Maudlin acknowledged mistaken policies of the past and noted the importance of reversing the roles and once again placing children under the direction of their parents. "We do not think it's proper for us to tell parents how their children should be educated," the Benedictine wrote. "Parents are the true, we think, educators of their children." Still, many at Crow Creek continued to attend mass and connect with priests and sisters who had been a large part of their early lives. Several Benedictines, too, stayed connected to the school, offering assistance during several years of transition and later through the remaining Catholic churches at Crow Creek and Lower Brule.[73]

Many narratives of the past flatten history to simple, one-directional paths that followed prescribed routes. Like native sources, a careful analysis of Catholic sources opens up texture and complexities of life experiences that ring truer to our own lives. Along with historic documents, oral history research helps to raise up new perspectives, surprising developments, and ironies in history. A few selected priests transformed themselves into intercultural intermediaries, tribal advocates for land reclamation, Dakota language speakers, and organizational leaders. In the case of Maudlin specifically, connections to native

72. Under Maudlin's leadership, the center collected thousands of books, tens of thousands of images and other American Indian materials and served a resource center during its years of operation. In 2012, Blue Cloud Abbey closed, and abbey leaders named the Center for Western Studies at Augustana University in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, as the repository for the center's materials.

73. Maudlin, oral diary, 29 May 1992, AIRP 1730; interview of Maudlin, Blue Cloud Abbey, Marvin, S.Dak., by O. A. Rothlisberger, 12 July 1971, South Dakota Oral History Project 193, SDOHC. *See also* Maudlin, oral diary, 4 Dec. 1977.

people helped him better understand his own religious tradition and prompt him to rethink Catholic-Dakota relations.

In the summer of 1998, I interviewed Albert Bruce, originally from Belcourt, North Dakota, on the Turtle Mountain reservation. Bruce graduated from Stephan in the 1950s and, after time in the military, became a mission employee for decades. Noting the irony of the original Catholic program of cultural conversion in a time when priests attend powwows and sweat-lodge ceremonies, he suggested the Benedictines were more recipients than agents of change. Now, Bruce mused, "a lot of the religious [Catholic priests] are into Indian culture, so maybe they're the ones that got won over."[74]

74. Interview with Albert Bruce, Stephan, S.Dak., 30 Sept. 1998.