



STUDIES

IN
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

Numa J. Rousseve Jr.

Creole, Catholic, and Jesuit

R. BENTLEY ANDERSON, S.J.

THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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the first word

It was an odd case of serendipity. Last fall, as I was preparing my annual attempt to get my undergraduate silent-film historians to wrestle with *The Birth of a Nation*, the September 13 issue of *The New Yorker* ran Jill Lepore's splendid review of Isabel Wilkerson's new book, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. Professor Lepore's essay in a current periodical provided the contemporary hook I needed to motivate the class to grapple with the issues raised by D. W. Griffith's masterpiece of 1915. The film provokes critical schizophrenia in any modern viewer. First admiration: without a doubt Griffith pushed the infant medium beyond the nickelodeon to the realm of serious art. Since it comes early in the semester, before the students have much sense of its antecedents and before they have learned to read silent film with any facility, most struggle to appreciate its achievement. With patience and perseverance, many work through their boredom with the slow pace of the film, and begin to notice the brilliant editing, expressive close ups, creative montage, and breathtaking spectacle, all achieved without the help of computer-generated image enhancement. Grudgingly perhaps, some even admit it was worth the effort. It's hard work, but they can do it.

The other side of the film's split personality provides even more of a challenge. It provokes revulsion. Griffith's artistic achievement is undoubtedly tainted by his grotesque racism. Born in Kentucky, the son of a Confederate Army veteran, he absorbed the culture of his time and place. The first part of the film presents an idealized vision of plantation life, with slaves going happily about their tasks in the cotton fields and mansions. In the central section, he shows the Civil War as a glorious but tragic crusade to save a traditional way of life. The final sequences show Griffith's understanding of Reconstruction. He sees abolitionist politicians from the north, called carpetbaggers, abetted by the Union army of occupation, consisting largely of freed slaves, as ruthlessly shredding the fabric of Southern culture. For example, he portrays the South Carolina legislature, dominated by black representatives, who eat chicken and drink whiskey during the session, as enacting laws to legitimize the mixing of the races, even condoning the ultimate abomination in Griffith's mind, intermarriage. Faced with the prospect of such an outrage to its sensitivities, the white citizenry rises up and forms the Ku Klux Klan to enforce their vision of the natural order of things, by whatever means necessary. Griffith clearly applauds the rise of the Klan not only as an act of desperation but as the rebirth of chivalry. In the fantasy ending, he compares the restoration of

white supremacy and the birth of a nation to a vision of the heavenly realm after the ravages of the war and Reconstruction.

Griffith claimed to be shocked that some people saw his sanitized portrayal of slavery, his defense of the tactics of the Klan, and his brutal caricatures of African Americans as unacceptable. After all, he reasoned, as the film went through its prolonged production schedule, he had actually toned down many of the elements of Thomas Dixon's venomous novel, *The Clansman*, from which the script was developed. During its production, Griffith kept Dixon's title, but as he began to appreciate the epic nature of the work, he changed it to his more grandiose title. He changed narrative details as well. In the film, Little Flora (Mae Marsh) leaps to her death to avoid the amorous advances of a crazed black soldier. In Dixon's near pornographic version, a patrol of rogue black soldiers rapes both mother and daughter, and after their night of terror the two women, overwhelmed by shame, commit suicide together the next morning. In an early version of the script, Griffith's final scene shows freed slaves lined up on the shore waiting to take ships back to Africa, but he dropped it in favor of his heavenly vision, with Christ blessing the new Utopia.

As a concession to the public opinion of the time, he treats Lincoln with great respect, since the murdered president had already achieved iconic status in both the North and South. In keeping with the prevailing narrative of the time, Griffith believes things would have been different had Lincoln lived. Johnson and Grant were the villains of Reconstruction: Johnson, a Tennessean, by imposing it and Grant by continuing it. In one of the great publicity coups of all time, Dixon used his personal connections to Woodrow Wilson to get an endorsement from the president, a Virginian by birth and son of a minister who worked in Georgia. Advertising featured the Wilson's's alleged assessment: "History written in lightning." The actual author of the phrase may well have been Joseph Tumulty, Wilson's press secretary, who saw in the film an invaluable tool for reinforcing a Democratic solid South in reaction to the liberal, abolitionist Republicans, who had manipulated the former slaves into joining the party with the equally cynical goal of creating a Republican solid South. (As the controversy erupted after the comment appeared in print, Wilson's staff vigorously denied that he had ever made such a statement, and the "endorsement" was withdrawn from the ads.)

Undergraduates, understandably revolted, think the director must have been crazed. They have great difficulty getting inside Griffith's world and examining it through his eyes. After all, if they go to a hospital for a sprained ankle, they would not even notice if the admitting staff, nurses, orderlies, and emergency-room doctors turned out to be African American. I tell them not too long ago, in some parts of the country at least, black people might not be admitted as patients, even in a medical emergency. Then I push them toward the edge of incredulity by my personal recollection of Jackie Robinson breaking into the line-up of the beloved Brooklyn Dodgers. And, I ask, can you imagine a time when black players could not play for the N.B.A.? In one sense, it's gratifying to know these memories are fading and it takes a deliberate pedagogical

strategy to get them to understand the toxic race issues that lasted through the first half of the twentieth century; their innocence testifies to our progress as a nation. Still, forgetfulness puts us at risk. Not being aware of recent history leads to the illusion that we have no problems today. Even more frightening, our ignorance blinds us to the peril of repeating the errors of the past. The skin color and facial features, language, and religion may change, but the principle of bigotry remains the same.

Here's where I found Jill LePore's review most helpful. In the book, Isabel Wilkerson interviewed hundreds of those who had taken part in "the great migration" of African Americans from the rural South to the urban centers of the North. During the period from the end of Reconstruction to the 1970s, when the civil rights movement began to change public policy, six million souls made the journey north to an unknown promised land to seek "the warmth of other suns," a phrase borrowed from Ralph Ellison. Their future was uncertain at best, and at worst terrifying, but it was better than what they had at home. From a distance, the concept of segregation may strike some as benign enough. Well into the twentieth century intelligent people and the courts embraced the legitimacy of "separate but equal," a legacy of the Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). By any measure of opportunity, education, standard of living, health care, working conditions, or any other criterion one could think of, "equal" proved a fiction, and perhaps more accurately a lie, but it was a lie many people were willing to believe for convenience sake. Questioning the myth might lead to unforeseen, uncomfortable consequences.

A distinguished Harvard historian, Professor LePore comments on the core message of the book: the motivation of these voyagers was not primarily economic opportunity, at least in its early stages; it was the desperate need to escape the daily humiliation and repression of "Jim Crow," the horrific practices put in place or condoned by law to enforce the "separate" half of the maxim. Flogging, mutilation, arson, and extortion were common tactics employed to keep blacks "in their place." And these practices were not merely the aberrations of a few psychopathic zealots. To document the virulence and acceptability of the racial policies of the time, at least among some constituencies, LePore repeats Wilkerson's citation of Gov. James K. Vardaman of Mississippi, who defended these practices in 1903: "If necessary, every negro in the state will be lynched." By some estimates, during those years one black man was lynched every four days. As late as 1938, the U.S. Senate debated making lynching a Federal crime, and Sen. Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi argued: "If you succeed in the passage of this bill, you will open the floodgates of hell." Too quickly we forget. Professor LePore stresses the timeliness of the book by pointing out the obvious, that the generation that experienced Jim Crow, forced segregation, and migration is rapidly passing from the scene. It's important to get these experiences on the record, so that future generations can-

not retreat into convenient, sanitized myths, as Griffith did about the age of slavery and Reconstruction.

My own study of this period, admittedly based in film production rather than politics or sociology, has led me to an unexpected conclusion: white people are also victims of segregation. The absolute segregation of the races undeniably institutionalized a stunning ignorance of African American culture among whites, and into the void of ignorance flow misunderstanding, distortion, and caricature. Here's a very concrete and very personal example of what I'm talking about. In 1970 I finished a Ph.D. in film from a highly respected university. Never during my years of study, had I ever had any inkling that a shadow film industry had thrived among black communities in the United States from the silent era well into the 1950's. As a graduate student preparing for comprehensives, I must have read many of the standard film history books of the time. I can only conclude now that these made no mention of the pioneers of the black film industry, who were working at the same time, but in a totally different universe from D. W. Griffith.

Recent scholarship convicts us of our ignorance. Noble Johnson and Lincoln Motion Picture Company of Chicago released *The Realization of A Negro's Ambition* in 1916, one year after *The Birth of a Nation*. The independent producer Oscar Micheaux followed closely. In 1919 he produced *The Homesteader*, adapted from his novel of the same name and based on his own experiences of life in South Dakota. He followed this with classics such as *Within Our Gates* (1919), reputedly a response to Griffith, and *Body and Soul* (1924), featuring a very young Paul Robeson. A few years later, Herb Jeffries, once the lead singer in Count Basie's orchestra, produced and appeared in a number of musical Westerns, such as *Harlem on the Prairie* (1937). He became known to his fans as "The Bronze Buckaroo." These productions, enormously popular with their target audience, were all but invisible outside the black community. Known as "race movies," they were distributed for showing in segregated theaters in the South and in some large, lavish movie palaces in black neighborhoods of urban centers of the North. Much of their history is summarized in the PBS documentary *Midnight Ramble*, first aired in 1994, and narrated by David McCullough. The program is still available in VHS format. In the past twenty years an extensive body of research has been published, but the scholarship came too late. All but a few of these films have been lost to the ravages time works on nitrate-based film stock.

These days reconstructing the coherent story of slavery, reconstruction, Jim Crow, and segregation claims a high priority among cultural historians; that much is clear. But one must be careful of the point of view. Can there be much doubt that until quite recently the preponderant voice in the story telling comes from white scholars, looking back with guilt or anger or embarrassment at what happened? In this monumental undertaking, it's important to give voice to both sides of the divide of segregation, as Isabel Wilkerson has done. Oscar Micheaux was by no means an artistic equal to D. W. Griffith, but he deserves a significant place in the catalogue of important American film makers.

He put a different image of African Americans up on the screen, and his audiences delighted in seeing their version of their story told by one of their own with them in mind. It's a chapter in America's cultural development that white audiences seldom read. At least, they haven't until the last two decades, much to their impoverishment.

No doubt many such voids lurk in the cultural history of our nation, perhaps for lack of someone able to tell the story, perhaps for lack of someone willing to listen. Like undergraduates struggling to get inside Griffith's world, or Micheaux's for that matter, American Jesuits have a difficult time trying to imagine what the Society was like in the days before the civil-rights revolution. The solutions seem so obvious now, and again, like our students, we may well take our progress for granted. The distant past has quietly slipped away, and this may be all to the good. As I struggle to look back, I vaguely remember an awakening during my novice days at St. Andrew-on-Hudson. Like many teenagers of the time, I was totally oblivious to the fact that there was a racial problem and that even then several Jesuits were confronting it honestly. Of course there were conflict and reaction. I had the first inkling of the notion of social justice as a novice by reading *Christ's Blueprint for the South*, founded by Louis Twomey, S.J., in 1948. Although we were generally isolated from the outside world, for some odd reason this splendid periodical found its way to the back of the ascetory. It was a revelation to me, and it was doubly shocking that it came from Loyola University in New Orleans, a city in an area where total segregation was still, I believed, the common practice.

In this issue of *STUDIES*, Bentley Anderson tries to recreate those days by telling the story of Numa Rousseve, the first black Jesuit admitted to the New Orleans Province. He and I entered the Society in the same year, 1956. Through a series of lengthy interviews and extensive correspondence, Bentley encourages Mr. Rousseve to add his own recollections of life as a Jesuit scholastic. Together they add a texture and complexity to his situation that most of us, as outsiders, might never have suspected. We can be grateful to both Bentley and to Mr. Rousseve and his classmates for taking us on a journey through an earlier time. It should prompt all of us to remember where we've been and where we want our country and our Society to be in the days to come.

Richard A. Blake, S.J.
Editor

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Numa Rousseve as a Jesuit scholastic

Photograph courtesy of Numa Rousseve

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Numa J. Rousseve Jr.

Creole, Catholic, and Jesuit

Like the rest of the country in the post-war period, the New Orleans Province struggled to accommodate to new realities of integration. Despite resistance, it opened its schools and then its novitiate to applicants regardless of race. Numa Rousseve was the first man of color to enter the Society in the New Orleans Province, and his perspective on the experience reveals many of the undercurrents operative during that period of social change.

The Sin of Emancipation

The Civil War historian Shelby Foote, speaking at a luncheon to celebrate the dedication of the J. Edgar and Louise S. Monroe Library at Loyola University New Orleans in 1999, commented that there were two sins in American history: the sin of slavery and the sin of Emancipation. The former, he pointed out, was obvious: slavery was an unpardonable sin, which marred the American political experiment. The latter, he clarified, was a sin of omission. Emancipation was not a sin. No, the sin of emancipation, he stated, was the way in which it was carried out. Rather than producing a biracial or multicultural Southern society, the United States government allowed white Southerners to continue to oppress and to exploit the freedmen and their descendants well into the middle of the twentieth century.

From 1865 to 1965 the people of the United States of America struggled to bring about full civil and human rights for African Americans. This hundred-year struggle to build a more perfect union called

for removing the last vestiges of racial bias and bigotry from the land. This process was met with resistance: socially, economically, politically, and religiously. This study examines how Southern Catholics, specifically the Jesuits of the New Orleans Province, embraced racial diversity in the post–World War II period.

If there were a Jesuit culture of race relations in the mid-twentieth century American South, it was one of accommodation to the societal norms as they existed, neither violating the laws of charity nor questioning the laws of justice. Above all, the Southern Jesuit culture of race called for maintaining unity in thought and action so as not to disedify or antagonize fellow Jesuits or the laity. Between 1947 and 1952, the façade of Jesuit unity crumbled as pro-integration and pro-segregation (or status quo) factions within the New Orleans Province struggled to impose on each other their particular viewpoints regarding racial justice. Nevertheless, by 1952 the Jesuits of the South made the conscious decision to desegregate its various apostolic endeavors as well as the province itself.¹ The decision to end racial segregation, as previous research has demonstrated, was based on the need to bring about a unity of thought and action among members of the order concerning racial matters.² Discord would not be allowed to fester; unity would be achieved—the province would become “color blind.” In 1956 Numa J. Rousseve Jr. of New Orleans, Louisiana, became the first black applicant accepted by Southern Jesuits, and on July 30, 1956, he became the first black novice of the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus. His story is part of the larger American narrative regarding race and religion in the American South during the Cold War.³

¹ The first integrated Jesuit educational institution in the province was Loyola University New Orleans (LUNO), which desegregated its School of Law in the fall of 1952. The state of Louisiana had already begun the desegregation process the year before by admitting black applicants into Louisiana State University’s Law School in 1951; LSU desegregated its undergraduate program in 1953. In 1954 Southwestern Louisiana Institute (University of Louisiana-Lafayette) desegregated its undergraduate program.

² For an analysis of the development of the New Orleans Province race policy, see R. Bentley Anderson, “Jesuits and Jim Crow Catholicism: The Society of Jesus and Racial Segregation,” in *Ite inflammate omnia*, ed. Thomas McCoog (Rome: Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2010), 343–58; “Black, White, and Catholic: Southern Jesuits Confront the Race Question, 1952,” *Catholic Historical Review* 91 (July 2005): 484–505, and “‘Norman Francis Is a Negro’: Race, Religion, and Catholic Higher Education in New Orleans, 1948–1956” (Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 2001), 195–281.

³ This article deals only with the question of black-and-white race relations in the New Orleans Province in the mid-twentieth century. I do not address the question

Creole Catholics

Numa Rousseve was born in New Orleans in 1939, the eldest child of Numa, Sr. and Evelyn (née Brown) Rousseve. His was a talented family.⁴ His father studied art at Boston University, eventually completing his bachelor's degree at Xavier University in New Orleans.⁵ He would spend his academic life teaching at his alma mater, heading the Art Department.⁶ His uncle Ferdinand studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and, from 1961 until his death in 1965, he served as head of the Department of Fine Arts at Boston College.⁷ Another uncle, Charles B. Rousseve, a historian, authored *The Negro in Louisiana*.⁸ His uncle Maurice, a member of the Society of the Divine Word,⁹

of Anglo-Hispanic relations, though that is a ripe area for research. And I am unable to delve into the impact that the Second Vatican Council had on American Catholic race relations and protest movements. That is yet another worthy research field.

⁴ Regarding the life history of some of Numa Rousseve's relatives, see "Dictionary R" in *The Dictionary of Louisiana Biography* at <http://www.lahistory.org/site35.php>, accessed November 1, 2010.

⁵ Xavier University of Louisiana, the only black Catholic institution of higher learning in the United States, was established in 1925 as a Normal School (a Teachers College, that is) by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, a religious congregation founded by Katharine Drexel in 1891. For a history of the university, go to <http://www.xula.edu/about-xavier/index.php>, accessed November 1, 2010. For a life of Drexel, see Katherine Burton, *The Golden Door: The Life of Katharine Drexel* (New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1957); Consuela Marie Duffy, *Katharine Drexel: A Biography* (Philadelphia: Peter Reilly Co., 1965); Patricia Lynch, *Sharing the Bread in Service: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1891–1991* (Bensalem, Penn.: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1998); and Lou Baldwin, "Katharine Drexel: The Formation of a Saint," *American Catholic Studies* 121 (Fall 2010): 115–21.

⁶ *Ebony* magazine highlighted an exhibit at Xavier that was organized, in part, by Mr. Rousseve. See "Xavier Art Show: Negroes Finance a Cultural Event in New Orleans," *Ebony* (February 1960): 126–30.

⁷ *African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary, 1865–1945*, ed. Dreck S. Wilson (New York: Routledge, 2004), s.v. "Ferdinand Lucien Rousseve (1904–1965)"; "Ferdinand L. Rousseve," *Jet*, August 19, 1965: 45; A. N. Marquis, ed., *Who Was Who in America*, vol. 33 (New York: Marquis Co., 1964), s.v. "Rousseve, Ferdinand Lucien."

⁸ Charles B. Rousseve, *The Negro in Louisiana: Aspects of His History and His Literature* (New Orleans: The Xavier University Press, 1937). For an on-line biographical sketch of Rousseve, see <http://www.nathanielturner.com/negrocatholicwriterssources4.htm>, accessed November 1, 2010

⁹ St. Augustine's, the first seminary for black Catholics, opened in 1923 in Greenwood, Miss., under the auspices of the Society of the Divine Word. The facility was re-

was the sixteenth black priest ordained in the United States,¹⁰ and his aunt Teresa was a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family.¹¹

Rousseve was of African, French, Haitian, and Native American descent, making him and his family Creoles of color (or people of color).¹² His grandmother, he recalled, was a “very fair French-looking” woman and “not particularly black-looking”; nevertheless, Creoles were classified as black under Louisiana law.¹³ His family took issue with the law, contributing to the legal fees for Homer Plessy’s challenge in 1892 to Louisiana’s race laws.¹⁴ The case and its appeal resulted in the 1896 Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which legalized racial segre-

located to Bay St. Louis, Miss., in 1923. For more information on the congregation, go to <http://www.svdssouth.com/>, accessed November 1, 2010.

¹⁰ Stephen J. Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the Struggle for Black Priests, 1871–1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 456. There were only fifteen black priests in the United States in 1933. The following year seven black men were ordained, including Maurice Rousseve. See also Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad, 1990).

¹¹ Co-founded by Henriette Delille in 1842, the Sisters of the Holy Family was the second religious congregation established for black women in the United States. For a history of the Sisters of the Holy Family, see <http://sistersoftheholysfamily.com/welcome.html>, accessed November 1, 2010; David R. Collins, *Servant to the Slaves: The Story of Henriette Delille* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2000); Mary B. Deggs, *No Cross, No Crown: Black Nuns in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). On March 27, 2010, Pope Benedict XVI declared Delille a venerable in the Roman Catholic church.

¹² For a history of Creoles in the United States, see Mary Gehman, *The Free People of Color of New Orleans: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (New York: Margaret Media, 2009); Joseph G. Tregle Jr., “Creoles and Americans,” in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 132–33; for an explanation of the term, see Joseph G. Tregle, “On That Word ‘Creole’ Again: A Note,” *Journal of Louisiana History* (Spring 1982): 193–98. In this work, the term “Creole” means anyone born or descended of anyone born in the colony of Louisiana whether their ancestors were from Africa, Europe, or the Caribbean. However, in New Orleans today, Creole is often used to identify a person of mixed racial ancestry and having a French surname.

¹³ Germaine A. Reed, “Race Legislation in Louisiana, 1865–1920,” *Louisiana History* 6 (Fall 1965): 384–85.

¹⁴ Rousseve, interview by this author, tape recording, Greenburg, N.Y., July 24, 2010 (hereafter referred to as “Rousseve 2010 interview”). It was his maternal great-grandfather, Numa Mansion, who helped fund the case.

gation in the United States.¹⁵ Edward Douglass White, one of the seven justices of the Supreme Court who voted with the majority opinion in this decision, was a graduate of Immaculate College, the Jesuit-run high school in New Orleans.¹⁶

As black Catholics, the Rousseves experienced segregation both inside and outside the church. Because of the parish “experiment” of Archbishop Francis A. Janssens, fifth archbishop of New Orleans (1888–97), which called for the establishment of a race-based parish for African Americans in the archdiocese in 1895, racial segregation became the church norm by the 1920s.¹⁷ Black Catholics of New Orleans were expected to attend these race-based churches regardless of their proximity to a local, but white, parish church.¹⁸ Even though Jim Crow had come to church, historian Adam Fairclough noted that the establishment of racial parishes most probably ensured that the black Catholics of southern

¹⁵ Mark Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice: Albion Tourgee and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁶ Edward Douglass White (1845–1921) was a lawyer, politician, and judge. In 1874, he was a member of the Louisiana State Senate, and from 1879 to 1880 he was an associate justice of the Louisiana State Supreme Court. The state legislature appointed him to the United States Senate in 1891, in which he served for three years. In 1894 President Grover Cleveland nominated him for the United States Supreme Court, and in 1910 William Howard Taft elevated him to the rank of Chief Justice. Taft would succeed him in 1921. In *Guinn v. United States*, White authored the unanimous decision outlawing the grandfather clause that had been used to disenfranchise black voters. See Kermit L. Hall, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the Supreme Court of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁷ Roger Baudier, *The Catholic Church in Louisiana* (New Orleans: A. W. Hyatt Stationery Manufacturing, 1939); James Bennett, *Religion and the Rise of Jim Crow in New Orleans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Dolores E. Labbé, *Jim Crow Comes to Church: The Establishment of Segregated Parishes in South Louisiana*, USL History series, no. 4 (Lafayette, La.: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1971); Annemarie Kasteel, *Francis Janssens 1843–1897: A Dutch-American Prelate* (Lafayette, La.: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1992).

¹⁸ John B. Alberts, “Origins of Black Catholic Parishes in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1718–1920” (Ph.D. diss., presented at Louisiana State University, 1998), 77–98; James B. Bennett, “Catholics, Creoles, and the Redefinition of Race in New Orleans,” in *Race, Nation, and Religion in the Americas*, ed. Henry Goldschmidt and Elizabeth McAlister (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 183–208; Roger Baudier, *Catholic Church in Louisiana*, 508; Labbé, *Jim Crow Comes to Church*, 69–70, 78–84; Douglas J. Slawson, “Segregated Catholicism: The Origins of Saint Katherine’s Parish, New Orleans,” *Vincentian Heritage* 17 (Fall 1996): 141–84; James Bennett, *Religion and the Rise of Jim Crow in New Orleans* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Louisiana remained in the fold, rather than joining race-friendly Protestant denominations.¹⁹

When Numa Rousseve was a child, his family belonged to Corpus Christi Church and later Holy Ghost Church, where the young Rousseve became involved in the life of the parish, serving as an altar server and choir boy. His priestly vocation was nurtured through his experience of the church at the local and archdiocesan level as well as by the example of his extended family.²⁰

Rousseve entertained the idea of becoming a priest at an early age. At the unveiling of a portrait of Archbishop Joseph Francis Rummel at Xavier University, the young Rousseve recalled the archbishop's asking him what he wanted to be when he grew up.²¹ He replied, "A priest." Rummel, according to Rousseve's father, suggested that when the young Numa was older and still expressing interest in becoming a priest, the family should come and see him. Rousseve's father interpreted that to mean that the archbishop would handle the expenses associated with training a seminarian for the diocesan priesthood. Through grammar school and high school, Numa Jr. continued to nurture the idea of becoming a priest.

It was only natural that I should come up with that [priesthood], and I suppose I tried out the fireman and sailor route . . . but . . . I got a reaction when I said I wanted to be a priest . . . because of the background in the family. It meant something. And I was a very sincere believer in the church and all that I was taught, and so I was going to be a priest.

Upon completion of eighth grade, he expressed the desire to enter the minor seminary, but both his father and his parish priest encouraged him to wait and complete high school first, which he did. Like his father

¹⁹ Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915–1972* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1995), 14–15.

²⁰ Numa J. Rousseve Jr., interview by this author, tape recording, Greenburg, N.Y., January 15, 2000 (hereafter referred to as "Rousseve 2000 interview"). I would like to thank Janet Rivet for transcribing this interview.

²¹ Joseph Francis Rummel served as the ninth archbishop of New Orleans from 1935 to 1964.

and mother, he attended Xavier University Preparatory School, graduating in 1956.²²

Growing Up in New Orleans

Segregation, Rousseve recalled, “was probably the overwhelming thing in our lives growing up. . . . it was a daily issue, a daily thing, you had to live with. You had to sit behind the screen on the buses [and street cars]; you had to go up the side entrance to the balcony at the Orpheum [Theater]; you couldn’t get into the Saenger Theater; you had white and colored water fountains . . . everything was segregated.” Nevertheless, he did not harbor ill will towards whites. He credits his parents and his teachers, members of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, for this attitude.²³ The sisters “taught us to be as good as we could be. They wanted us to do well.” His parents dealt with the race question “by being proud [to be people of color] and as good as anyone.” They “did not teach us to be harsh or critical” of whites. In an effort to effect positive change in New Orleans’s race relations, his father worked with Catholic interracial organizations, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and civil-rights attorney A. P. Tureaud.²⁴

Given that the Rousseves were Creoles of color, one would have expected that they assumed the same social and cultural mores as the majority of people occupying this racial caste: self-segregating between lighter-skinner people of color and darker-skinned folks, but that was

²² Rousseve 2000 interview. Xavier University Preparatory School was established in 1915 by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People. For information on the Prep, go to <http://www.xavierprep.com/> accessed November 1, 2010.

²³ For information on the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, see n. 4 above.

²⁴ Rousseve 2000 interview; for a history of Catholic interracial activities in New Orleans, see R. Bentley Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic: New Orleans Interracialism, 1947–1956* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005). For a history of the struggle for civil rights in New Orleans, especially the life of A. P. Tureaud, see Liva Baker, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: Hundred-Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996). For a history of the NAACP in the city of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana, see Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915–1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995); also see Kim Lacy Rogers, *Righteous Lives: Narratives of the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

not the case.²⁵ His parents did not subscribe to that type of socioeconomic and racial profiling. "My Dad and Mother believed in people and . . . [my father] was very catholic, with a small 'c,' in that respect." However, Rousseve did know some Creoles who did discriminate. He knew of some individuals from high school who "threw parties and only certain people were invited, and I was told that there was someone at the door with a brown paper bag; and if you were darker than the bag, you could not come in . . . but that was never a part of our family." And he knew of relatives who, based on their appearance, "passed" from the black world into the white world.²⁶

As a teenager, Rousseve examined the local telephone directory to locate his various relatives, as all the Rousseves in New Orleans were related. When he discovered a family he did not know, he would tell his father, "I'm going to call them and say hello and he would say, 'Don't bother, they don't want to hear from you.'" Those individuals, he discovered, were on the white side of the Rousseve clan.²⁷ Siblings of his father's cousin, Daniel Rousseve, made the conscious decision to enter the white world. From that point on, those relatives disavowed knowing any black Rousseves. A culture of silence had influenced the culture of race. His family "did not talk about these things, and that's the way it was. . . . You did not talk about the interracial aspect of the family; nobody wanted to talk about that."²⁸

Of course that did not mean that the young Rousseve would not test the racial attitudes of his fellow New Orleanians:

As a kid I remember walking along Napoleon Avenue, going to and from church, to Lourdes [Parish], on a weekday morning [and] as is the custom in New Orleans . . . you say "good morning" to people or smile and say "hello," and I used to always study and observe how the whites would react to that, whether

²⁵ For an analysis of Creole life in Louisiana, see Virginia Dominguez, *White by Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993); and Sybil Kein, ed., *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).

²⁶ Rousseve 2000 interview.

²⁷ For an examination of the topic of racial passing, see James M. O'Toole, *Passing for White: Race, Religion, and the Healy Family, 1820–1920* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Elaine Ginsberg, *Passing and the Fictions of Identity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995).

²⁸ Rousseve 2000 interview.

they would ignore me totally, coldly, or at least acknowledge my presence with their eyes or perhaps even respond. . . . I remember even growing up on Columbus Street, where we had whites living on the same block as the blacks, and again, my way, and this was my Dad, this was his way, was to greet everyone; and I used to get a big kick out of greeting the whites to see when those who wouldn't say "hello," would finally say "hello."²⁹

Rousseve was well aware of race in New Orleans. His family might not talk about racial passing, but that did not mean they were oblivious to race matters. He was attuned to his racial surroundings. Having to navigate a culture of race all his life would enable him to live and work in a biracial world as a young adult and a Jesuit.

A Time of Decision

The young Rousseve came of age in a post-World War II America that was engaged in a bitter struggle with its erstwhile ally, the Soviet Union, to win over the hearts and minds of the peoples of the world. If the United States was to be the leader of the free world and gain the support of the newly emerging independent nations in Africa and Asia, the United States would have to resolve its race policy. Treatment of U.S. servicemen prompted the president to act.

Returning from the war, black servicemen were physically and psychologically harassed and assaulted. Informed of various racial incidents involving men in uniform, President Harry S. Truman established the Commission on Civil Rights in 1946 to address the race question in the United States. The result was the report "To Secure These Rights," issued in December 1947, which laid out a comprehensive plan for bringing about racial equality in America. In his State of the Union Address of January 1948 and his Special Message to Congress the following month, Truman called on Congress to enact civil-rights legislation as outlined in the commission's findings.

For his part, Truman desegregated the armed forces and the federal government by executive order in July 1948. The Democratic Party, building on Truman's initiatives, adopted a strong civil-rights plank at its national convention that summer, alienating the southern wing of the party. Leaving the fold to challenge Truman, southern Democrats

²⁹ Ibid. For an insight into race relations in mid-twentieth-century New Orleans, read John Howard Griffin, *Black like Me* (New York: New American Library, 1960).

created the States' Rights Democratic Party with Governor Strom Thurmond of South Carolina as their presidential nominee. There was no doubt that race was a major factor in Louisiana during the 1948 presidential election as Thurmond carried the state with 49 percent of the popular vote; Truman received 32 percent. After the 1948 election, race factored into all presidential elections. Southern Catholics were not immune to this development.³⁰

In the post-World War II years, members of the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus were also growing and developing in their own understanding of race issues and religious life in the South. The decision to desegregate the New Orleans Province was based on the need to resolve the contentious internal debates taking place among Southern Jesuits regarding the morality of racial segregation in the American Catholic church and American society. At Loyola University of the South in New Orleans, the race question was contested both in the classroom and in the Jesuit community. On campus Joseph H. Fichter, S.J., professor of sociology, taught that racial segregation was untenable, while Martin Burke, S.J., a philosophy teacher, nuanced the issue, justifying the practice. In the Jesuit residence, pro-segregation and pro-integration Jesuits would not sit together in the dining room.³¹ It was the situation at Loyola University that forced A. William Crandell, S.J., provincial of the New Orleans Province, with prodding from Jesuit officials in Rome, to convene a meeting of key members of the province in 1952 to resolve the race issue. Between January and July of that year, a series of preliminary meetings was held to outline a race policy for the province.³² In August 1952 some four dozen members of the New Orleans Province gathered at St. Charles College in Grand Coteau, Louisiana, home of the province novitiate, to hammer out the final draft version of a province policy statement regarding interracial relations.³³

³⁰ William C. Berman, *The Politics of Civil Rights in the Truman Administration* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1970); Kari A. Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South, 1932-1968* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Michael Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003); Harvard Sitkoff, "Harry Truman and the Election of 1948: The Coming of Age of Civil Rights in American Politics," *Journal of Southern History* 37 (November 1971): 597-616.

³¹ See chapters 2, 3, and 4 in Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic*.

³² Anderson, "'Norman Francis Is a Negro,'" 225-40.

³³ Members of the New Orleans Province attending the Grand Coteau meeting were A. William Crandell, provincial; Andrew Smith, rector-president, Spring Hill Col-

During their deliberations, the participants learned that no Jesuit province in the United States had an exclusionary policy (the New Orleans Province just did not accept black applications) and that five provinces already had men of color in their ranks. While the preliminary report recommended a non-exclusionary race policy, attendees wondered whether the number of white vocations to the Society would decline if blacks were admitted. Would the young men themselves decide not to enter an integrated religious order or would their parents dissuade them? Southern Jesuits also knew that the prospect of a black priest administering the sacraments to white Southerners was fraught with many dangers. Nevertheless they decided to move forward.³⁴

Andrew C. Smith, S.J., dean of men at Spring Hill College and chair of the committee handling the issue of black candidates to the Society, presented the committee's recommendations to the Grand Coteau

lege and chairman; Anthony Acheé, tertian instructor; Carmine Benanti, pastor, St. Joseph's Church, Mobile; George Bergen, assistant dean of Arts and Sciences, Loyola University; Joseph Burleigh, pastor, Sacred Heart Church, Grand Coteau; Harry Crane, former provincial; Edward Donahue, superior, Manresa Retreat House, Convent, Louisiana; Patrick Donnelly, rector-president, Loyola; Edward Doyle, vice-president of Loyola University; Ross Druhan, classics teacher, St. Charles College, Grand Coteau; John Druhan, pastor, Gesu Church, Miami; Joseph Fichter, professor of sociology, Loyola; Harold Gaudin, president of St. John's High School, Shreveport; William Harty, pastor, Holy Name of Jesus Church, New Orleans; Michael Kennelly, principal, St. John's High School, Shreveport; Cecil Lang, assistant to the provincial; Guy Lemieux, philosophy professor, Loyola; Franklin Lynette, philosophy professor, Spring Hill; Thomas Macnair, assistant pastor, Sacred Heart Church, Tampa; Michael Majoli, religion and sociology teacher, Spring Hill; Anthony Mangiaracina, novice master; Joseph Maring, pastor, St. Mary's Church, Key West, Florida; Aloysius Mulry, pastor, Sacred Heart, Tampa; Peter O'Donnell, rector, St. Charles College; William O'Leary, regent of the Dental School, Loyola; Lawrence O'Neill, president of Jesuit High School, New Orleans; Edward Sheridan, tertian instructor; Thomas Shields, pastor, Immaculate Conception Church, New Orleans; Claude Stallworth, principal, Jesuit High School, New Orleans; John Sweeney, president, Dallas College Preparatory; Cornelius Thensted, pastor, Church of Christ the King, Grand Coteau; Henry Tiblier, superior of the House of Studies at Spring Hill; Louis Twomey, regent of the Law School, Loyola; Robert Tynan, teacher of mathematics and religion, Dallas Preparatory; Robert Walet, president and principal of Jesuit High School, Tampa. Absent were Robert Bryant, pastor, St. Joseph's Church, Macon, Georgia; Patrick Kelleher, pastor, Immaculate Conception Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Sam Hill Ray, instructor of religion and student counselor at Loyola. From the "Minutes of the Province Meeting on Interracial Relations, August 28-29, 1952, Grand Coteau, La, August, 1952." Data found in the Archives of the New Orleans Society of Jesus (hereafter referred to as MPMIR; the archives, ANOSJ).

³⁴ MPMIR, 3rd session, February 23, 1952, ANOSJ.

attendees. First, aspirants to the Society of Jesus should not be excluded solely on the basis of race. Second, obstacles that might keep a black candidate from successfully incorporating into or persevering in the Society had to be removed. And finally, Jesuits and those they serve need to be exposed to “a broader view of racial acceptability” through contact with Jesuits of other races, mission appeals, academic opportunities, and so on.³⁵

After Smith’s presentation, Father Crandell, the provincial, was asked if there was a policy regarding the admission of blacks to the province. He replied that there was a policy “but not one of exclusion”; what the policy happened to be was not stated. Prior to this time, a black youth interested in entering the Society of Jesus would have been encouraged instead to contact the Society of the Divine Word, which accepted and trained black Catholic men for the priesthood.³⁶

Since the Society of Jesus had both priests and brothers within the order, the members of the Grand Coteau meeting had to decide if brother candidates or priest candidates (known as scholastics) would be accepted first. Because the priesthood signified membership within the hierarchical church, the provincial informed the members that the province would first accept a scholastic candidate and then brother candidates. Crandell wanted to avoid giving the perception that blacks were being limited to religious life as brothers and not priests.³⁷ This decision to desegregate the New Orleans Province was not a first in Louisiana, as the archdiocese of New Orleans and the diocese of Lafayette already had black seminarians.³⁸ The decision was not even the first among American Jesuits, as the New Orleans Province was joining the other United States Jesuit provinces that already accepted black applicants.³⁹

Smith also asked how young black Catholic men were going to learn of the change in policy regarding entrance into the order. Crandell

³⁵ MPMIR, 6th session, ANOSJ.

³⁶ Ibid. Concerning the Society of the Divine Word, see n. 8 above.

³⁷ MPMIR, 6th session, ANOSJ.

³⁸ Aubrey Osborne was ordained a priest for the archdiocese of New Orleans in 1953, and Louis LeDoux was ordained for the Lafayette Diocese in 1952. See Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar*, 404, 406, and 421.

³⁹ The other provinces were New England, Oregon, Maryland, New York, California, Missouri, and Chicago. See Raymond Bernard, “Jim Crow Vocations?” *Social Order* 8 (1949): 241–43.

explained that news of the change could be related by word of mouth, but he would not allow any public disclosure on a large scale. There were to be no press releases or public statements of any sort. He explained that "in these matters careful supervision should be exercised in any release given to the public concerning the policy and the practices of the New Orleans Province," lest there be public backlash.⁴⁰

Admission of black candidates into the novitiate introduced the question of how many men to accept. Joseph H. Fichter, S.J., suggested that the province accept more than one black applicant per year, as he believed that a single black candidate in the group ran the risk of being alienated from the majority white novices or being marginalized by the group. Anthony Mangiaricina, S.J., master of novices, agreed, stating that accepting only one black applicant would be problematic as it would be "difficult for one Negro novice to survive at Grand Coteau."⁴¹

Whomever the New Orleans province accepted, the first black applicants would be carefully screened in order to fend off any criticism resulting from the change in policy. Being the first meant finding a young man who could assimilate into the white Catholic culture of the New Orleans Province. He would also have to have an intellectual capacity comparable to that of the white applicants and novices so as to dispel the racist notion that African Americans were not intellectually capable of higher studies. Furthermore, he would have to have the disposition to endure uncomfortable racial situations or conversations. The first black novice would have to accommodate to a Jesuit culture of race.

At the completion of the Grand Coteau gathering, Crandell appointed Smith to produce the final version of the province policy statement.⁴² By November 1, 1952, Smith had completed the task. At the same time, the provincial sent extracts of the draft to several prominent United States theologians for their comments to ensure orthodox thinking.⁴³

⁴⁰ MPMIR, 6th session, ANOSJ.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Consultors' minutes, New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus, September 24, 1952, ANOSJ.

⁴³ Consultors' minutes, New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus, November 1, 1952, ANOSJ. (Five Jesuit theologians were asked to review the "Moral Aspects" section. All five had responded with detailed critiques of the statement by December of 1952. Letters from John R. Connery to Cecil Lang, September 28, 1952; William E. Donnelly to Cecil Lang, September 28, 1952; Gerald Kelly to Cecil Lang, October 1, 1952; Jo-

The statement was still subject to Roman approval by John B. Janssens, S.J., superior general of the Society of Jesus.⁴⁴

While non-New Orleans Province individuals were consulted in the drafting of the policy statement, no black Catholics were. Failure to include blacks in the drafting of this document demonstrated the degree to which the Society of Jesus operated within the confines of its established rules and regulations as well as Southern societal norms. The omission also reflected a certain degree of paternalism as white southern clerics decided what was best for black Catholics. And it reflected white attitudes regarding assimilation: blacks would be expected to adopt white cultural norms and religious practices; apparently whites had nothing to learn from the black community and its spiritual and sacramental experiences.

While the policy statement was being reviewed and prepared for transmission to Jesuit officials in Rome, the Southern Jesuits held a province congregation in April 1953. This congregation, mandated by the rules and regulations of the order, met to discuss the state of affairs in the province and the order, and to make recommendations to the Jesuit superior in Rome concerning governance of the Society. The members constituting this body were chosen based on rank and seniority in the Society. It was during this meeting that individuals could submit postulates (proposals, that is) for the congregation to consider; normally these proposals called for the Society to act on a particular issue. Those accepted by a majority vote would be forwarded to the Jesuit superior general for consideration. At the April 1953 meeting, the third postulate presented for consideration called for a proscription against the admission of blacks into the high schools, colleges, and the novitiate "since it would be inopportune and detrimental to our work" at the present time.⁴⁵ This postulate represented the one opportunity for those who favored maintaining segregation to take a stand and attempt to influence

soph Duhamel, October 26, 1952, to Cecil Lang; John C. Ford to Cecil Lang, October 9, 1952; Edwin Healy to Cecil Lang, November 22, 1952, ANOSJ.

⁴⁴ John B. Janssens, S.J., served as superior general of the Society of Jesus from 1946 to 1965.

⁴⁵ Letter from A. William Crandell to John B. Janssens, April 24, 1953, *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu* (Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus; hereafter referred to as ARSI). I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the late Charles E. O'Neill, S.J., in translating this document.

province policy; while not quite “massive resistance,” it was organized resistance nonetheless.

The reasons given for presenting this postulate were that neither Southern blacks nor Southern whites were prepared for racially mixed education, integrated education was against civil law, and discord would result from desegregating the schools. No reason was given for keeping the novitiate segregated, but the sentiment was obvious. Those who favored integration countered that black Catholics would be denied a full Catholic education if the postulate was enacted. Furthermore, it would slow down progress to the resolution of a social problem the church and the Jesuits wanted resolved. And finally, the postulate contradicted the views stated by many of the Jesuits who attended the August 1952 interracial-relations meeting. The postulate was defeated: seven votes for, thirty against, with five abstentions. Approximately 30 percent of those attending the province congregation favored maintaining the status quo regarding racial segregation.⁴⁶

Procrastination on the part of the New Orleans Province provincial, William Crandell, S.J., delayed getting the policy statement to Father Janssens until January 1954.⁴⁷ In May of that year, Janssens returned the policy statement to Crandell with recommended changes.⁴⁸ The General and his staff had reworked two of the draft paragraphs that dealt with “moral aspects” and “general principles” to provide clarity and to strengthen the text. Moreover, Janssens took exception to comments made in the section “Some Practical Applications to Our Works,” specifically the paragraphs pertaining to the university and college as well as the novitiate.

The final draft policy statement regarding the novitiate stated that “it is our settled policy not to exclude any postulant [meaning a candidate for admission into the novitiate] to the Society on the sole grounds of race.” Rather than a negative declaration, Janssens wanted a positive one, suggesting, “It should be positively asserted that race cannot be considered in any regulation in any way whatsoever when it is a question of our candidates, whether they are white, black or of any other col-

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* The seven votes for this postulate represents 17 percent of the vote and the five abstentions represents another 12 percent; combined, almost a third of those participating in this meeting favored the status quo of racial segregation.

⁴⁷ Letter from A. William Crandell to John B. Janssens, January 23, 1954, ARSI.

⁴⁸ Letter from John B. Janssens to A. William Crandell, June 17, 1954, ARSI.

or; only those criteria of fitness can be considered which are defined in Canon law or our Constitutions."⁴⁹

Regarding individual applicants, the draft policy stated that care should be taken by fellow Jesuits not to encourage Negroes "who by their appearance, character, educational background and temperament do not give the strongest promise of successful assimilation." Janssens rejected this thinking. Concerning one's appearance, he stated,

I cannot approve that a Negro be rejected because he rather displeases us because of his "appearance." Whether he is black or white, it is necessary that he have a "respectable appearance"; but this "appearance" cannot be judged according to our narrow norms as white men. A Negro with a large nose and thick lips appears deformed *to us*: these are pure prejudices, bordering on the ridiculous—we Religious have no reason to harbor them.⁵⁰

Concerning the question of assimilation, he took issue. Janssens believed that the notion of "strong promise of assimilation" was subject to a very negative interpretation. In its stead he suggested that assimilation be replaced by "strong promise of useful service in the Society," and this standard would apply to anyone seeking admission into the order.⁵¹ When drafting this response to Crandell, Janssens added a handwritten comment, which was not included in his final letter concerning this topic:

I ask that we whites not believe that we have the criteria of a better education among all men: I have long found more exquisite urbanity, if I might give only one example, among African adolescents in the Congo than among us Europeans. I ask that it not be required that they be assimilated to us but rather that we might imitate them in this manner!⁵²

Janssens's suggestions were incorporated into the official province-policy statement that was promulgated on September 9, 1954, three months after the United States Supreme Court rendered its landmark

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid. (emphasis in the original text).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Draft letter of John B. Janssens to A. William Crandell, June 2, 1954, ARSI (exclamation point in the original).

decision concerning racial segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas*.⁵³ Crandell hoped that this document would clarify any doubts that members of the province might have regarding the morality of the interracial question. The provincial counseled against publicity regarding this new policy. "We do not want headlines, but results. The more casual we can be in matters like this, the greater seems to be the prospect of solid achievement." Crandell urged province members to follow and embrace the policy with open minds and hearts. He told his readers that he did not expect that everything he said would be accepted "with your unqualified and enthusiastic assent," but he did expect "as a result of a careful adherence to the principles, policy and program outlined in this letter, a marked improvement in uniformity of doctrine, in the avoidance of extreme statements on one side or the other, and, in general, in the tempering of zeal with prudence and the preservation of a quiet spirit."⁵⁴

And so it came to pass that in September 1954 the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus officially ended racial discrimination within the province and its many apostolic undertakings. There were winners and there were losers in the Jesuit race debate. Southern Jesuits who favored desegregation won. Those who favored segregation or the status quo lost. Like the secular law of the land, the New Orleans Province embraced equality. This new culture of race called for acceptance, acquiescence, and silence. A culture of silence, however, can be debilitating and counterproductive, especially when the issue touches on controversial issues of faith and culture. What happens to the Jesuit who disagrees with official policy, either Jesuit or ecclesiastical? Do they speak out, and if they do, are they silenced? Resistance or adoption came at a price. With regard to race relations in the United States, the need for unity in 1952 was necessary for Southern Jesuits to face the possible challenges they might encounter for shattering the race barrier. The same could be said for the nation. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's failure to speak out in support of the *Brown* decision, many argue, emboldened American dissent against the Supreme Court and desegregation efforts.⁵⁵

⁵³ Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Knopf, 2004).

⁵⁴ "Declaration on the Interracial Question," September 9, 1954, ANOSJ.

⁵⁵ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Karen Anderson, *Little Rock: Race and*

Change and the Culture of Silence

The admission of the first black candidate for the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus, Numa J. Rousseve Jr., occurred the same year that Senator Strom Thurmond (D-SC) authored the "Southern Manifesto," calling for a reversal of the *Brown* decision by all legal means,⁵⁶ and the same year that Archbishop Joseph Francis Rummel threatened white New Orleans Catholics with excommunication for establishing and recruiting members for "The Association of Catholic Laymen" (ACL). This organization was established to

foster, promote and protect the moral, physical, cultural and educational welfare and the general interests of all the people by an investigation and study, in all its aspects, of the problem of compulsory integration of the black and white races; . . . to unite thoughtful and sincere persons in an organization which seeks to attain prudent, just and peaceful solution to this racial problem; and to unite all Catholics in daily prayer to the end that the Holy Spirit may enlighten and guide this Association, its members, and all other persons concerned with the issue of racial integration.

And membership was limited "to persons of the Caucasian race who profess the faith of the Holy Roman Catholic church."⁵⁷ The organization was suppressed within months of its establishment. What was most troublesome regarding the association was the fact that the archbishop had been trying to lead Catholics toward a better understanding of proper race relations in the United States, beginning in 1953 with publication of his pastoral letter *Blessed are the Peacemakers*, which forbade

Resistance at Central High School (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizen's Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1944-64* (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

⁵⁶ Clive Webb, *Massive Resistance: Southern Resistance to the Second Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁷ "Articles of Incorporation of Association of Catholic Laymen," box 83, folder 9, Louis J. Twomey Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Monroe Library, Loyola University New Orleans. One member of the Association was Lucien C. Delery, M.D., who delivered this author into the world and was the family physician for many years. See also, Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic*, 167-71. In 1955 Rummel placed the chapel at Jesuit Bend, Louisiana, under an interdict for not allowing a black priest to preside at a Sunday liturgy. R. Bentley Anderson, "Prelates, Protest, and Public Opinion: Catholic Opposition to Desegregation, 1947-1955," *Journal of Church and State* 46 (Summer 2004): 617-44.

racial discrimination in the archdiocese, and again in 1956 with *The Morality of Segregation*, which rejected racial segregation. Neither letter was well received by a majority of Catholic New Orleanians.⁵⁸

Given the political and religious climate regarding race in America, it is understandable why the New Orleans Province Jesuits' culture



Back Row (left to right): Gordon Glasco, Gerald Fagin, John Hines, Thomas Fuechtmann, Henry Torres; **Upper Middle Row** (left to right): Philip Postell, Pat McDermott, Forrest Ingram, Numa Rousseve, Al Mills; **Lower Middle Row** (left to right): Anthony Daboub, Louis Lopez, Ralph Marcelli, Ront Drago, Alfred Tristan; **Front Row** (left to right): Ed Buvens, Leo Burleigh, Jack Oster, Jose Borges-Flores

Photograph courtesy of Numa Rousseve

of race called for prudent action. Efforts to promote and advance racial justice were being met with resistance. The year after Rousseve entered the Jesuits, the city of Little Rock, Arkansas, experienced the first of several attempts by Southerners to thwart desegregation through “massive resistance.” The city of New Orleans would undergo a similar struggle during the 1960–1961 academic year.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic*, 113–15 and 150–153; and “‘Norman Francis Is a Negro,’” 317–20 and 375–80. Rummel’s 1956 pastoral was drafted with the assistance of Louis J. Twomey, S.J., and based on the New Orleans Province policy statement of 1954.

⁵⁹ Again, I refer readers to Baker’s *Second Battle of New Orleans* for a full account of the New Orleans school-desegregation crisis.

As suggested by the New Orleans Province policy statement, identifying black candidates for the New Orleans Province was done informally between Southern Jesuits and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and members of the Holy Family Sisters. These women knew firsthand who was academically and temperamentally suited for the Jesuits' rigorous scholastic training. When asked by the Jesuits for the names of candidates, the Sisters at Xavier Prep mentioned Numa Rousseve. And it was through a hospital visit that Rousseve came in contact with the Society of Jesus. Numa recalled being asked, either in his junior or senior year of high school, whether he wanted to visit a priest who was sick in the hospital. Father Elmo Rojero, S.J., had had a heart attack, and it was he who wanted to see the young Rousseve. Apparently the sisters had been visiting the sick in the hospital and encountered Rojero, who inquired about potential black candidates for the Society of Jesus.⁶⁰

The visit with Rojero went well. "I liked him," Rousseve recalled. "He made it seem like it was a good thing to try this out [entering the Society]; and the Jesuits, as I began to learn about them, was a good organization." In his discussion with Rojero, Numa learned that he would be the first black novice for the province.

Rojero made that clear to me because they [Jesuit leadership] were not stupid. They knew that not everybody, even the Jesuits, were going to be supportive of this, and they wanted to be sure that I could take whatever it was I was going to have to take. . . . And that's how I ended up entering the Jesuits, July 31, 1956, the Feast of St. Ignatius Loyola.⁶¹

His parents were very pleased that their son was entering the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits were no strangers to the Rousseve family, especially since the elder Rousseve had worked with Loyola University professors Joseph H. Fichter, S.J., and Louis J. Twomey, S.J., on social justice issues. "My Dad was very pleased, my mother just said in essence, when we drove up to [St. Charles College, the New Orleans Province novitiate in] Grand Coteau, the last thing she said, 'Remember if you ever change your mind and you don't want to do this, you always have a home.'" He believed that his parents and his relatives were pleased with his entrance into the Society of Jesus, given their Catholic back-

⁶⁰ Rousseve 2000 interview.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* His official entrance date, per the 1957 catalog, was July 30, 1956. See *Catalogus Provinciae Neo Aurelianensis Anni 1957* (New Orleans: Society of Jesus, 1957), 22.

ground and history, and they “were looking forward to the day I would be ordained.”⁶²

The novices already at Grand Coteau were not informed that a black candidate would be among their members. This strategy was in keeping with the province policy that there was to be no publicity surrounding the change in Jesuit race relations. Whether an individual desiring to become a Jesuit was black or white was supposed to make no difference to the Society of Jesus.⁶³

Jim Bradley, S.J., white and a native of Albuquerque, New Mexico, who had entered the Society of Jesus in February 1955, arrived in Lafayette, Louisiana, by train that winter. At the station he was greeted by the novice master, Anthony Mangiaracina, S.J. It was in the Lafayette train station that Bradley encountered the segregated South. As he recalled, “I started to go into the ‘interstate waiting room’ to collect my trunk [but Mangiaracina] . . . quickly directed me to the ‘local waiting room.’” On the drive to Grand Coteau, the novice master explained to his new charge how white Lafayette had circumvented the federal statutes regarding integration in interstate travel: officials simply relabeled the traditional “white” and “colored” waiting rooms at the railroad station to “local” and “interstate.”⁶⁴ Bradley discovered that Mangiaracina was using “the incident to sound me out on my racial attitudes.” After Bradley disclosed that he had served as the godfather to an African American child when he was home from college one summer (a nun who had taught him had asked), the novice master “seemed noticeably relieved and we moved on to other matters.” By the time Rousseve entered the novitiate, Bradley was already in the juniorate. He has no recollection “that we had any formal announcement that Numa was entering—but

⁶² Rousseve 2000 interview.

⁶³ The novices in 1955 were Paul Anders, Easton Ardoin, Ferrel Blank, Jim Bradley, Richard Bray, Jerome Chapman, Thomas Fernon, Thomas Gragg, Francis Mele, Samuel Moreau, Daniel Barfield, Robert Buchheit, Arthur Crist, Francis Dowling, Kenneth Gelpi, Patrick Hunter, Albert Jung, Norb Keller, Philip McNeil, Arthur Ory, Robert Quintana, Francis Renfro, Vincent Rieger, Richard Stolz, Joseph Teague, Joseph Vanderholt, Joseph Wasaff. See *Catalogus Provinciae Neo Aurelianensis Anni 1957*, 21–22.

⁶⁴ Regarding Supreme Court decisions that addressed racial discrimination in interstate transportation and commerce, see *Mitchell v. United States* (1941), *Irene Morgan v. Commonwealth of Virginia* (1946), and *Henderson v. United States* (1950) as well as “Constitutional Law. Interstate Commerce. State Segregation Statute,” *Columbia Law Review* 46 (September 1946): 853–56.

that was when there was very little exchange between novitiate and juniorate."⁶⁵

Neither Richard Buhler nor Jerry Fagin nor Phil Postell, white Southern Catholics and fellow first-year novices with Rousseve, recall being informed during the interviewing process that an African American was joining the New Orleans Province.⁶⁶ And they have no recollection of being asked any race-based questions. Buhler and Postell, both New Orleans natives, knew Rousseve in high school and were aware that he was applying to the Society.⁶⁷

The lack of information regarding applicants to the Society of Jesus or those accepted by the Society was standard. Until an individual arrived on the doorsteps of the novitiate and actually stepped inside, there was always the possibility that that person might not officially enter the order. Given that Southern societies in the United States operated within a coded world of race, violating that code was to invite rejection, to run the risk of being ostracized, or to incur physical harm. The situation facing Southern Jesuits was complex. Was it prudent to remain quiet regarding the change in their race policy? Was it advantageous to maintain a culture of silence? Was it just to avoid addressing the issue directly with others? The province policy statement made it clear that Jesuits were not to draw attention to this new policy on race. By not directly addressing the race question with applicants or new members, Southern Jesuits maintained that standard. Not publicizing the change in policy avoided possible public confrontations, loss of financial support, and decrease in vocations. A culture of silence has intended and

⁶⁵ James P. Bradley, S.J., e-mail message to this author, July 9, 2010. Among other duties and responsibilities as a Jesuit, Jim Bradley served as provincial of the New Orleans province from 1996 to 2002.

⁶⁶ Gerald M. Fagin, S.J., interview by this author, tape recording, New Orleans, La., November 19, 2009. Fagin has been a professor of theology at Loyola University New Orleans since 1978: Department of Religious Studies, 1978–1996, and Loyola Institute for Ministry, 1996–2010, with one year off for other duties; Philip Postell, S.J., interview by this author, tape recording, Dallas, Tex., February 7, 2010 (hereafter referred to as “Postell 2nd interview” as he was interviewed while I was working on my dissertation and again for this article). Postell has served as formation director of the New Orleans Province from 1978 till 1987, president of Jesuit High School New Orleans from 1987–1992, and president of Dallas Preparatory School, 1992–2010]. Richard Buhler, S.J., interview by this author, tape recording, St. Louis, Mo., May 31, 2010; Buhler has served as teacher, retreat director, and pastor in the Missouri Province.

⁶⁷ Postell 2nd interview; Buhler interview.

unintended consequences; in this case, it did not mean that one was maintaining the status quo of racial discrimination.

Phil Postell credits his parents and his Jesuit High School New Orleans teachers, especially Emmett Bienvenu, S.J., for his liberal approach to race relations in the South. "Emmett Bienvenu . . . brainwashed me and brainwashed my classmates" regarding the social teachings of the church as he had introduced his students to issues of social justice.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Postell acknowledged the contribution of the sodality movement in helping him develop sensitivity to race matters.⁶⁹

Richard Buhler also acknowledged the influence the sodality had on his consciousness regarding race matters. Growing up in New Orleans, Buhler noted, one "took segregation as a given." However, in the mid-fifties things began to change, with the Jesuits of New Orleans Jesuit High School playing a part. The school faculty and administration allowed their students to participate in Catholic interracial events. It was while attending Jesuit High School that he attended an interracial dance sponsored by the sodality, and it was during the summer of his junior year in high school that he participated in an integrated "Summer School of Catholic Action" with students from the black high schools, St. Mary's Academy and Xavier Prep, in attendance.⁷⁰ It was through his contact with Xavier Prep that Buhler came to meet Rousseve.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Postell, 2nd interview. The irony of Postell's statement cannot be overlooked. Emmett Bienvenu's brother-in-law Jackson Ricau was one of three Roman Catholics excommunicated by Archbishop Joseph Francis Rummell in 1962 for his defiant stance against the church's desegregation policy. Even in death, Jackson Ricau and his family remained defiant. In his obituary, the family claimed the elder Ricau had reconciled with the Roman Catholic Church (see Ricau obituary, *Times-Picayune*, February 11, 2001). According to officials of the archdiocese of New Orleans, he did not. "I am unaware of any reconciliation. I do not know the source of the information printed in the *Times-Picayune*" (letter from Monsignor Thomas J. Rodi to this author, March 6, 2001, and in his possession). Rodi now serves as archbishop of Mobile, Alabama.

⁶⁹ A sodality was a church-sponsored devotional and charitable body of lay persons in the Roman Catholic Church, organized for the spiritual growth and development of its members. Members would attend Mass, recite the rosary, and offer other prayers in honor of the Blessed Virgin.

⁷⁰ Founded by the Sisters of the Holy Family, St. Mary's Academy became the first high school for "colored girls" in New Orleans in 1867. Presently it educates girls and young women from pre-kindergarden (age 3) through grade 12 of high school. See n. 10 above for information regarding the Sisters of the Holy Family. For a history of St. Mary's Academy, see <http://www.smaneworleans.com/site.php> accessed November 1, 2010.

⁷¹ Buhler interview.

Jerry Fagin, a native of Dallas, understood he lived in a racially segregated world; it was “clearly [a] segregated society . . . [with] little contact with blacks.” African Americans were an unknown quantity for this young man growing up in Texas during the 1940s and 50s. The only time he recalled encountering people of color was when he went to school, riding the bus: blacks, however, sat in the back. In the summer of 1956 his experience of race changed.⁷²

Fagin, Postell, Buhler, Rousseve, and their fellow novices broke down America’s race barriers by living, working, and praying together in Grand Coteau, Louisiana. The Jesuit culture of race took on a new dynamic as members of the New Orleans Province embodied the Mystical Body of Christ through life in the novitiate.⁷³ However, one question remained: how would they get along?

Rousseve remembers his fellow first-year novices as a “great group. We had a large class; we had nine [people] from Dallas and five from New Orleans. It was a fantastic year, and all were characters. . . . it was a mixed group. . . . We got along well.”⁷⁴ Fagin confirmed this recollection, as he did not recall that the first black novice of the New Orleans Province was “treated differently” or that he “was excluded from anything.” He found Rousseve to be a “very gracious person,” “sophisticated,” and “a good person to deal with.” Fagin credits Rousseve’s socioeconomic background as a factor in his ability to assimilate into this all-white environment. In the final analysis, Fagin viewed Rousseve as “just one of the guys. I just think he was just one of the novices.”⁷⁵

There was one image, however, that remained with Fagin over the years regarding Jesuit race relations in the novitiate. It concerned laun-

⁷² Fagin interview.

⁷³ The Mystical Body of Christ was a popular religious image in the 1940s and ’50s that referred to the unity of all believers. See Pius XII, *Mystici corporis Christi* in *The Papal Encyclicals 1939–1958*, ed. Claudia Carlen (Raleigh, N.C.: Pieran Press, 1990), 37–63; Daniel Lord, “What Is This Mystical Body?” (St. Louis: The Queen’s Work, 1939).

⁷⁴ Rousseve 2000 interview. Those who entered in 1956 with Rousseve included Richard Buhler, Paul Bunch, Leo Burleigh, Donald Burns, Anthony Daboub, Gerald Fagin, Thomas Fuetchmann, John Hines, William Lindley, Louis Lopez, Raphael Marcelli, Albert Mills, Gordon Glasco, Forrest Ingram, Charles Koch, Lee McDavid, Patrick McDermott, John Oster, Van Grigsby Peterson, Philip Postell, Richard Tonry, Henry Torres, Alfred Tristan, Robert Vasquez, Allen Vaughan. See *Catalogus Provinciae Neo Aurelianusis Anni 1957*, 22.

⁷⁵ Fagin interview.

dry. In those days there was a common laundry service, which meant that everyone brought their clothes to the laundry room for cleaning. Fagin remembers entering the room and seeing two bins, one with the word “white” and the other marked “colored.” “This was the normal way to separate the laundry,” he recalls, “but I remember [thinking], ‘Wow, this is a little awkward,’ and I think Numa was right around with me at the time and . . . I could imagine what his feeling was when he said [to himself]: ‘Am I supposed to put all my clothes in the colored bin?’”⁷⁶

Fellow novice Phil Postell concurred with Fagin’s and Rousseve’s recollections. Furthermore, Postell credits his peers’ views on race for making the Grand Coteau experience positive. He found his fellow novices to be “very liberal, their thinking on the race question was ahead of the general [American] society; these guys were more Jesuit than Catholic.”⁷⁷ And Rich Buhler recalled that some of his Jesuit contemporaries “seemed very liberal politically” as some favored Adlai Stevenson for president rather than Dwight Eisenhower in 1956.⁷⁸

While Fagin, Postell, and Buhler found their fellow novices to be progressive in their racial attitudes, they do not recall ever hearing their novice master, Anthony Mangiaracina, discuss the issue of race and religion. Fagin found his novice master to be

simple, not in a bad sense, a simple man who was pious. He was very pre-Vatican II in his theology and his understanding [of] religious life. And the novitiate was, it could have been, 1940 in terms of what the novitiate was like. Not many things had changed. We had all the usual customs and all the usual structures. . . . He gave conferences on the vows and prayer and things like that. . . . He gave us a good solid foundation in spirituality in the context of the ‘50s in terms of prayer . . . [recall, this] was before the renewal of the [*Spiritual Exercises*], before directed retreats.

If race was a problem for a novice, Mangiaracina might have heard about it, but not the other novices. “This was a time in religious life,” Fagin noted, “that did not foster [individual disclosure] . . . there wasn’t much personal sharing at that time. . . . The spirituality was so

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Phil Postell, interview by this author, telephone interview (New Orleans–Dallas), January 18, 2000 (hereafter referred to as “Postell 1st interview”). N.B.: Postell was interviewed while I was working on my dissertation and again for this article.

⁷⁸ Buhler interview.

objective. . . . And I don't know how many conferences we had on 'particular friendships,' that was a big thing for Mangiaracina."⁷⁹

As for the black novice of the New Orleans Province, Rousseve found Mangiaracina to be "a wonderful person with all the novices, very warm, very caring—[he] had those stern blue eyes when he wanted to, but a great smile. And allowed you to speak your concerns and you have all kinds of concerns being a novice in any religious order." Perhaps nostalgia has influenced Rousseve's recollections of his novice master. Many of those under Mangiaracina's care recall that he was a good man and a fine master of novices, but he was a man with limitations. Regarding race matters in the novitiate, Rousseve vaguely recalled that the novice master would inquire, "from time to time," if things were going well. He did not recall the master of novices ever directly asking him about race relations within the novitiate. Rousseve believed that "things were allowed to happen and there was support to make them happen properly."⁸⁰ The code of silence surrounding the new culture of race, however, did not preclude indirect inquiries.

Several months after Rousseve's entrance into the novitiate, Mangiaracina reported to Rome that all was well in Grand Coteau. The first black novice fitted in perfectly. "There has not been the slightest difficulty because of his presence." Indeed, the novice master hoped that God would send more young men like Rousseve to the novitiate.⁸¹

For those entering the year after Numa Rousseve, there is no indication that candidates for the class of 1957 knew of Numa's presence before arriving in Grand Coteau.⁸² John Payne, S.J., who entered on July 30, 1957, was not asked any race-based questions during the interviewing process. He came to know of Rousseve's "presence in the same way

⁷⁹ Fagin interview. Here Fagin's reference to "particular friendships" refers to an exclusive relationship with another Jesuit, which could be damaging to community life.

⁸⁰ Rousseve 2000 interview.

⁸¹ Letter from Anthony Mangiaracina, to John B. Janssens, January 4, 1957, ARSI.

⁸² The group of novices who entered the year after Numa Rousseve included James Benvenuti, Joseph Borges-Flores, Patout Burns, Edward Buvens, Raymond Canton, James Cassilly, Anthony Coco, Richard Cusimano, Charles Doherty, Robert Fitzpatrick, Donald Garcia, Raymond Healy, Peter Hilton, Joseph Hoppe, Raymond Kelly, Joachim Kuhn, Roy Lavergne, Ansharius Lawson, Samuel Lomonaco, James Lynch, Daniel McDonald, Jerome Neyrey, Anthony Ochoa, Daniel O'Shea, John Payne, Harold Peter, Wayne Roca, John Sisson, and Edward Welch. See *Catalogus Provinciae Neo Aurelianusis Anni 1958* (New Orleans: Society of Jesus, 1958), 23–24.

I met other second-year novices—through customary interaction in that environment. There was no special notice or emphasis given to me about him . . . and I assumed it was a standard operating procedure to accept different races and ethnic members in the Society at the time.”⁸³ A fellow novice classmate, Ed Buvens, from Shreveport, Louisiana, entered the novitiate on September 7, 1957, after completing his undergraduate studies at Rice University, a segregated institution of higher learning in Houston, Texas. Buvens did not remember being asked about his racial views during the application process. “No one raised the race issue . . . , [but] I was clear about being a person who favored rights for blacks.” Further, it was his experience that Southern Jesuits “were on my side against the more segregated-minded Southerners.” Once he got to Grand Coteau, he found out about the racial composition of the novitiate from the second-year novices.⁸⁴ During their time in the novitiate, none recalled Mangiaracina addressing the race question with them. The presumption, John Payne posited, “was that everyone was enlightened and accepting of racial diversity.”⁸⁵

While the presumption was that the Jesuits in Grand Coteau were enlightened and accepting of racial diversity, Numa Rousseve did encounter some stereotyping from a Jesuit instructor in the juniorate.⁸⁶ The incident involved a paper he wrote for his class on Shakespeare. Up to this point, Rousseve’s marks for his written work in the class were in the high-C or low-B range. However, his paper on *The Tempest* earned him a high mark and a call to discuss the work with the instructor. “I remember he called me into his room and he said, ‘This is a very nice paper,’ and he said, ‘Did you write this?’ and I said, ‘yes,’ and he said, ‘this is all your work? . . . This is a very good paper.’ . . . I did not let on and I re-

⁸³ John Payne, S.J., e-mail message to author, July 9, 2010. Payne’s doctoral research dealt with the apostolic life of Louis J. Twomey, S.J., editor of *Christ’s Blue Print for the South*, a monthly publication that addressed social issues facing the South in the post-World War II/Cold War era. See John R. Payne, “A Jesuit Search for Social Justice: The Public Career of Louis J. Twomey, S.J., 1947–1969,” (Ph.D. diss., presented at the University of Texas at Austin, 1976).

⁸⁴ Buvens interview.

⁸⁵ Payne interview.

⁸⁶ The juniorate was a two-year period of study after one completed the two-year novitiate. The liberal arts were stressed: classical and modern foreign languages, history, music, and English grammar and literature; the level of instruction was comparable to that found in the first two years of college. Both the novitiate and the juniorate were physically located in the same Jesuit complex.

member being highly insulted that he would think it wasn't my work." Later Rousseve would bring the matter to the attention of the director of St. Charles College, James Babb, S.J. During a private discussion with Babb, Rousseve recounted the experience with his professor, expressing his displeasure at being accused of not doing his own work. "I am sure I was more sensitive to it because I was black."⁸⁷

Sensitivity to race matters was not limited to the newly integrated novitiate and juniorate. The town of Grand Coteau and the Catholic church located there also had their own race issues, as both were segregated. White communicants attended services at Sacred Heart Parish, while black Catholics went to Christ the King, located approximately one hundred yards down the road. Both parishes were staffed by Southern Jesuits, but the men who worked at Christ the King were part of the "Negro Apostolate," which meant these men left the white world of American society and the American church and entered into the world of black America and black Catholicism.⁸⁸ While the ritual and liturgical practices were the same, the Negro Apostolate was viewed as separate from or foreign to the dominant white world—and indeed it was. Desegregating Catholic Grand Coteau would take place in the 1970s, but the black parish, later termed a chapel, remains open to this day. This decision was an act of accommodation to both black and white sensibilities as well as a code of silence regarding the culture of race in the church.⁸⁹

Moving through the Course

Most members of the New Orleans Province studied philosophy at Spring Hill College (SHC) in Mobile, Alabama.⁹⁰ Because of its exceptional science department, Jesuits from other provinces also studied at SHC. Most worked on their degrees in biology, chemistry, or physics, in addition to philosophy.

For the Jesuit scholastics, studies were uneventful. Given that SHC had desegregated in 1954,⁹¹ the Jesuits, lay students, faculty, and

⁸⁷ Rousseve 2000 interview.

⁸⁸ Edward D. Reynolds, *Jesuits for the Negro* (New York: The America Press, 1949).

⁸⁹ Trent Angers, *Grand Coteau: The Holy Land of South Louisiana* (Lafayette, La.: Acadian House Publishing, 2004).

⁹⁰ Charles J. Boyle, *Twice Remembered: Moments in the History of Spring Hill College* (Mobile, Ala.: Friends of the Spring Hill College Library, 1993).

⁹¹ Charles S. Padgett, "'Without Hysteria or Unnecessary Disturbance': Desegregation at Spring Hill College, Mobile, Alabama, 1948–1954," *History of Education Quar-*

staff were quite accepting of the scholastic Rousseve: "Anybody who had any problems with me being there never bothered to talk to me about it, or indicated to me that they had any problems about it. They were supportive and went out of their way to make me feel at home."⁹²

The other scholastics do not recall any racial incidents involving Numa, nor do they remember any official discussions, presentations, or conferences. However, Jim Bradley remarked that "we did have some discussions informally."⁹³ Many of the scholastics were exposed to race issues in America during their time in Mobile. On Sunday afternoons, John Payne recalled that

a number of us would go to the black neighborhoods within a couple of miles of the campus either to play sports, give religious instructions or try to foster understanding of such things as credit unions to the people living there. Frequently we would be cursed by drivers passing us as we walked in our cassocks to or from that [anti-Catholic] neighborhood.⁹⁴

It was also at SHC that Numa Rousseve came in contact with Albert S. Foley, S.J., professor of sociology and champion of civil rights for

terly (Summer 2001): 167–88. Because of the province race policy, Spring Hill College integrated in 1954. Members of the SHC community take pride in the fact that Martin Luther King Jr. mentions this fact in his 1963 "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." What SHC alumni, faculty, and administration consistently fail to understand is the fact that Spring Hill College could not have desegregated without the approval of province officials. Furthermore, it was the racial agitation at Loyola University that forced the Southern Jesuits to address the race issue. The faculty and students of Loyola openly promoted racial integration through academic meetings, social gatherings, and religious celebrations. The students and faculty at Spring Hill College did not. SHC was the beneficiary of New Orleans interracial efforts. See Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic*, 196–97. Even the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus gets the history wrong. The narrative in the benefactors' calendar for October 2010 has this statement: "Rooted in Catholic principles of social justice, Spring Hill College welcomed nine African-American students in its 1954 entrance class. This made Spring Hill College, for ten years, one of only two integrated colleges in the South." This statement is wrong, as more than two southern colleges had desegregated by 1954. Quoted from "Jesuits of the New Orleans Province 2010 Calendar," published for the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus by Noya Designs, Metairie, Louisiana, 2010.

⁹² Rousseve 2000 interview.

⁹³ Bradley interview.

⁹⁴ Payne interview. For an examination of Protestant Southern attitudes towards Catholics, see Andrew S. Moore, *The South's Tolerated Alien: Roman Catholics in Alabama and Georgia, 1945–1970* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

African Americans in Alabama.⁹⁵ Rousseve worked with Foley in the mid-sixties in his Human Relations Institute, helping prepare educational leaders in Mobile for the changes brought about by recent civil-rights advances. Foley wanted to bring together black and white teachers and principals as peers in order to prepare them for desegregation. He knew they had to work together to bring about a change in race-based education. For Rousseve, Foley's invitation to work at the Institute was obvious: "He was going to demonstrate . . . that blacks and whites could live and work together [since a black and a white Jesuit were already doing so at SHC] and that is what he was trying to help these people [understand] that they could too."⁹⁶

In the fall of 1963, Numa Rousseve, S.J., was sent to Jesuit College Preparatory School of Dallas (Dallas Jesuit) for his regency assignment;⁹⁷ he was to teach English and later speech as well. Fellow regent Ed Buvens, S.J., taught math, while Jerry Fagin, S.J., taught Latin and speech. There are no extant records explaining why Rousseve was sent to Dallas for his regency experience rather than to one of the other high schools in the province (namely, New Orleans, Shreveport, Tampa or El Paso). One can surmise that race was the reason. In the fall of 1955, Dallas Jesuit desegregated when Arthur Allen and Charles Edmond were admitted,⁹⁸ Allen was a freshman and Edmond a sophomore. Their admission to the high school was reported in the local newspapers; integration of the school caused only a minor disturbance, nothing more.⁹⁹ Given that Dal-

⁹⁵ Foley's academic and apostolic career focused on race relations in the United States. He wrote extensively on the topic; see his *God's Men of Color: The Colored Catholic Priests of the United States, 1854–1954* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Co., 1955); Albert S. Foley, "The Negro and Catholic Higher Education," *The Crisis*, August–September 1957, 411–419, 455.

⁹⁶ Rousseve 2000 interview.

⁹⁷ In 1969 the high school was officially renamed "Jesuit College Preparatory School of Dallas." Regency is a two- or three-year period of training when a young Jesuit lives and works in an apostolic community. The typical assignment is teaching at a high school or college, but one's regency assignment is tailored to the needs of a province, an individual's talents and abilities, and the discernment of the Jesuit and his superiors.

⁹⁸ In 1994 the Dallas Jesuit Alumni Board selected Allen as the recipient of the "Jesuit Distinguished Alumnus of the Year" award. He has also been honored by his alma mater, being inducted into the Jesuit Sports Hall of Fame. See http://www.jsrelays.org/Hall_of_Fame/allen.htm, accessed November 1, 2010.

⁹⁹ Minister's Diary, Jesuit Community, Dallas Jesuit, 1953–1956, archives of Jesuit College Preparatory School of Dallas (hereafter referred to as DJA), and House History,

las Jesuit had desegregated eight years prior to Rousseve's arrival, no one believed that the students, parents, or alumni would be shocked by his presence.

From all accounts, Rousseve was a popular English teacher.¹⁰⁰ Besides teaching, he was responsible for the student Glee Club, was the moderator of the high-school yearbook, *The Last Roundup*, and helped his fellow regents with some of their extracurricular activities. In late January 1965 Rousseve assisted fellow regents Patrick Hunter, S.J., and Frank Dowling, S.J., with the "Jesuit Invitational Speech Tournament," which included students from area public and private schools regardless of race.¹⁰¹ Members of the Dallas County School Board, however, would not allow the public-school students to participate in the competition because black students would be present. Public pressure forced the board to back down; public-school students would take part. According to Jerry Fagin, this was the first integrated high-school speech tournament in the state of Texas. The message for the visiting students, he noted, was not lost: black and white faculty and students at Dallas Jesuit were all part of the same academic community.¹⁰²

Racial solidarity was not limited to the classroom. Responding to Martin Luther King's call in March 1965 for fellow clergymen and religious to join him in Selma, Alabama, in the aftermath of the violent confrontation there over voting rights, the scholastics of Dallas Jesuit (namely, Pat Hunter, S.J., Jerry Fagin, S.J., Numa Rousseve, S.J., and Peter Hilton, S.J.) participated in a sympathy march in downtown Dallas. Their local superior and president of the high school, Robert Tynan, S.J., had given them permission to do so, but he also warned them that actions have consequences. Marching with a sign that read "Jesuit High School of Dallas prays and marches with Selma," a photo of the scholastics in Roman collars appeared in the local paper. The result: a major

Jesuit Community, Dallas Jesuit, 1955, DJA.

¹⁰⁰ Buvens and Fagin interviews.

¹⁰¹ *The Last Roundup* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Co., 1965), 149. The tournament took place on January 29–30, 1965.

¹⁰² Fagin interview. Fagin also recalled a prior incident involving the Dallas Jesuit speech team. Bill Flowers, a member of the squad, was not allowed to participate in a tournament because he was black. Rather than participate in a racially segregated event, the white members of the Dallas Jesuit team decided to boycott the event instead. It was a dramatic event for the students, Fagin noted, and a good experience for the whole student body, as they experienced racial justice firsthand.

benefactor of the school informed Dallas Jesuit officials that he would never again make a financial contribution to the institution. As Tynan had foretold—actions have consequences.¹⁰³

The culture of race in the New Orleans Province had taken a new direction, as had the church in the United States. Numa Rousseve's presence at Dallas Jesuit was not a cause for conflict or confrontation. Hosting an integrated speech tournament at the high school was an act of racial and social justice. Participating in a sympathy march for civil rights, even though it had negative consequences for the institution, was allowed, as it was the right thing to do. The culture of silence surrounding the race issue had disappeared. Race matters would be talked about and issues of social justice would be addressed openly.

An Amicable Parting

By the fall of 1965, Numa J. Rousseve, S.J., realized that he was being called to another way of life. The vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience were becoming and would have been major challenges for him if he remained in the order; he discerned that it was time to go.¹⁰⁴ In those days, however, Jesuits did not inform their peers of the impending departure. People left and that was it; Rousseve's departure was no different. Fellow novice classmate Jerry Fagin knew nothing of the decision. He had no idea why he left, but he also did not have the sense that folks were glad that he left or that it was a good idea. "It was cause for some sadness," Fagin noted, "that a guy who you spent all those years with feels called to go somewhere else."

Regarding life in the Society, Fagin wondered if it wasn't more difficult for Rousseve to "live in an all-white world." Nevertheless, he believed Rousseve was a good choice to be the first black novice for the New Orleans Province because his family background and upbringing prepared him for life as a Jesuit. "[H]is family were university people and he was comfortable in higher education. He was comfortable with all that. So I think it was probably, in some ways, it was easier for him than for someone who had been through public-school system."¹⁰⁵ Fagin also wondered if there wasn't a cultural chasm that he had to overcome. Rousseve himself dispelled that misconception, stating that "it is a mis-

¹⁰³ Fagin interview; Rousseve 2010 interview; *Last Roundup*, 1965, 151.

¹⁰⁴ Numa Rousseve, e-mail message to this author, October 11, 2010 (hereafter referred to as "Rousseve response, October 2010").

¹⁰⁵ Fagin interview.

take to assume I had to accommodate to the white culture of the New Orleans Province. I did have to learn the culture of the Jesuits, but that culture was not particularly 'white.'"¹⁰⁶

Ed Buvens also raised the specter of racial sensitivity. He believed that the white scholastics did not know how to handle their "racial feelings toward Numa," nor did they consider his "racial feelings."¹⁰⁷ They did not take into consideration what it meant to be black in America as compared to being white. Again, Rousseve did not worry about being black among whites. While he had grown up in a segregated world, he was raised in an interracial environment.

My teachers and parish priests throughout school included white and black teachers, both lay and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, and the Holy Ghost fathers, who were a perfect example of working together with us and who believed in us as able people. My antennae were very attuned to whether they were sincere or not, as all we 'black' people's antennae were, living in a segregated society.¹⁰⁸

The same would have been true for him during his years in the Society of Jesus.

Some might presume that Rousseve left the Society of Jesus "because of mistreatment over race." As he affirmed, "I had no problems with any of my colleagues in the novitiate, juniorate, philosophate, or regency." If individuals had any "reservations about my being there [meaning, in the Society], and I'm sure there were some . . . [they] kept it to themselves. They and I probably found out that I was just another person like them who wanted to succeed." Over fifty years after entering and forty years after leaving the Society, Rousseve wrote, "I was proud to be the first black Jesuit in the New Orleans Province."¹⁰⁹

In 1958 Lionel Honoré, S.J., who would become a Jesuit professor of foreign languages at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mas-

¹⁰⁶ Rousseve response, October 2010.

¹⁰⁷ Buvens interview

¹⁰⁸ Rousseve response, October 2010

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* After leaving the Society, Numa Rousseve studied in New York City, which is where he met his wife, Kaaren. Marrying in 1968, they reared two children in Greenburg, New York. Recently they celebrated their forty-second wedding anniversary. Rousseve's professional career was spent in banking.

sachusetts, became the second black to enter the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus.¹¹⁰ Numa's brother, Bartholomew, entered the order a year later in 1959; he stayed until 1975.¹¹¹ In 1970 Douglas Hypolite became the fourth African American to enter the New Orleans Province.¹¹² And in 1985 John Gaudeaux, n.S.J., became the fifth, staying only one year. There have been other African Americans to apply to the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus, but none has been accepted or entered; whether it was the individual's decision or the Society's is not public knowledge. In a region of the country which contains the largest concentration of black Catholics in the United States, one wonders why there aren't more black Jesuits in the New Orleans Province. Perhaps it is a question of assimilation and expectation of enculturation into a white, Euro-centric Catholic world—the very concern Father John B. Janssens, S.J., expressed—which has kept young black Catholic men from applying. Perhaps it is the dominance of the traditional black orders, the Josephites (Society of St. Joseph) and the S.V.D.s (Society of the Divine Word) that makes the Jesuits less attractive. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that there are few black Jesuits in the United States, regardless of region.¹¹³

The culture of race in the New Orleans Province has been one that focused on white Southerners, specifically helping them come to terms with one of America's more grave "sins"—racial discrimination. This sin forced religious white men of the mid-twentieth century to examine their consciences, admit their failings, and reform their lives. This reform came at a price. Members were told not to openly dissent to the new policy. They were told not to publicize the change. Unity would come at the expense of discussion and dissemination, which explains why many historians believe the Roman Catholic Church did not play a

¹¹⁰ Honoré died in June 2006.

¹¹¹ Bart Rousseve died in 1994. "Bart Rousseve, 53, African-American Institute exec, dies in car crash," http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1355/is_n18_v86/ai_15779642/, accessed November 1, 2010.

¹¹² Douglas J. Hypolite, S.J., joined the New Orleans Province in 1970. Since his ordination to the priesthood, he has been a teacher of French at Strake Jesuit College Preparatory, Houston, Tex. (1986–2003) and at Jesuit High School of Tampa (1981–1985, and from 2003 to the present). Currently he serves as head of the Language Department at Tampa Jesuit and rector of his community.

¹¹³ This author discovered that there are no statistics concerning the racial composition of the Society of Jesus in the United States, after sending a query to the Jesuit Conference in Washington, D.C.

role in bringing about racial justice in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the Jesuits of the New Orleans Province did promote civil rights for black Catholics in mid-century. They did so by officially desegregating the province and many of its apostolic works, beginning in 1952. Southern-Jesuit race relations would never be the same after the summer of 1956 when Numa Rousseve arrived in Grand Coteau, Louisiana; American race relations would never be the same, either, as the modern Civil Rights Movement was underway that same summer in Montgomery, Alabama.

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