

The Lange Letter

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Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange Guild News

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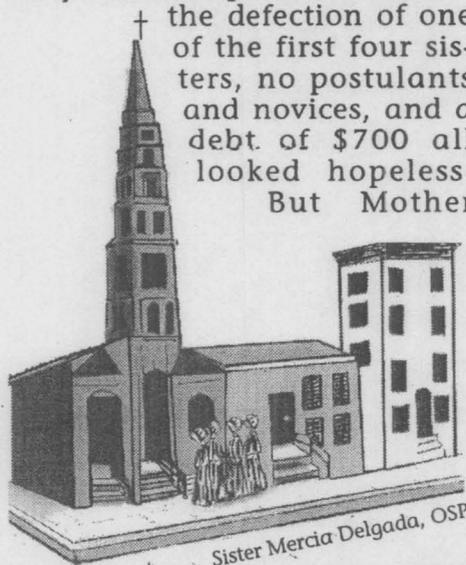
St. Alphonsus Marks 150 years

Saint Alphonsus and the Redemptorists Fathers had a profound effect on Mother Lange and the early Oblate Sisters of Providence. As some of the earliest worshippers, this German Church figures prominently in the history of the infant community of black women religious.

By 1845, the founder, Father James Hector Joubert, S.S., had been dead two years. The impact of his death was devastating upon the young congregation.

Ecclesiastical authority made no provisions for the Oblate's spiritual life (as was the custom at that time). The Sisters had no Mass, no regular confessor. "They stood in front of St. Alphonsus church hoping for spiritual comfort from some busy Redemptorist who might speak French. They were cold, hungry and discouraged." The Archbishop had even stated, "Cui bono?" ("What's the use?") and intimidated their disbanding.

With dwindling enrollment, only fourteen professed sisters, the defection of one of the first four sisters, no postulants and novices, and a debt of \$700 all looked hopeless. But Mother



Mary Lange led the sisters in responding to God's veiled providence in a practical way that provided a lesson and legacy for the next 166 plus years. Oblates would meet the needs of the times and do what had to be done for survival. In addition to continuing to teach free of charge, the sisters, took in washing, ironing, and mending. Mother Lange and a companion went to the seminary as housekeepers. This provided income to feed and shelter the orphans and sisters.

Through the Redemptorists at St. Alphonsus, St. James, and St. Michael's (Fells Point), God intervened. Due to the direct encouragement of the Vice-Provincial, Father John Neumann, C.S.S.R., (later Saint John Neumann), Father Thaddeus Anwander, C.S.S.R. became the "second founder" and saw the Oblates through the crisis as chaplain, confessor and friend until 1855.

Oblate Sisters salute the Redemptorists Fathers and Brothers. We pray for God's continued blessings upon the work and ministry emanating from St. Alphonsus as a "powerhouse of prayer."

BALTIMORE'S ARCHBISHOP BECOMES A "PRINCE OF THE CHURCH"

Baltimore's Archbishop was elevated to the College of Cardinals last November 26th. *The Lange Letter* for December, already in print, did not include a message of congratulations. We would like to publicly add our voices to the many that were forthcoming.

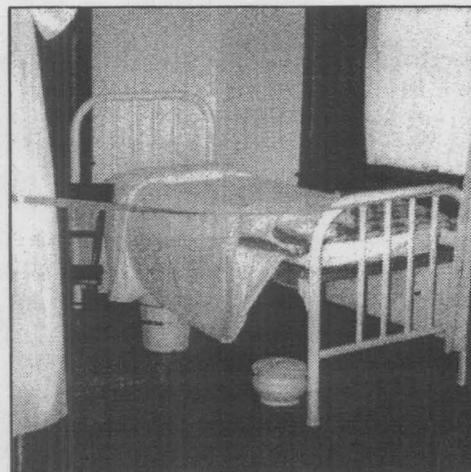
We are tremendously pleased at

Mother Lange Memorial Room a reality!

Tuesday, February 21 Baltimore's Archbishop William Cardinal Keeler blessed and dedicated the Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange Memorial Room. It offers Baltimore another site rich in historical and religious significance. The dedication ceremony was held at St. Frances Academy, the site of Mother Lange's last eleven years and of her death.

The room's main attraction shows an 8' X 9' curtained alcove. This space was commonly called a "screen" by the sisters, because it was partitioned from other alcoves by screens or curtains which were pulled at night for privacy.

See *Memorial Room*, page 2



the Holy Father's choice of our Archbishop. His reputation as leader spans the world and yet is rooted in Baltimore. For this we are grateful.

We take this opportunity to assure His Eminence, William Cardinal Keeler, of our continued prayers. He has shown great interest and concern in promoting the cause of Mother Lange. He shows every evidence that this support will continue.

Memorial Room, from page 1

A pilgrim visiting the MMEL Memorial Room will view artifacts of the 19th century. There are pictures and explanatory texts of Oblate history, present ministries, and a vision of future service. The walls are lined with framed quotations of "Mother Lange Said..."

The day became one of jubilee as St. Frances Academy chapel was filled with students, Guild Members, Board Members, and interested friends of the Mother Lange process for beatification. St. Frances students and MMEL Guild Chapter One members co-hosted the historic event.