

5 - Background on the Maryland Mission

The Maryland Mission began in 1634 with the arrival of Andrew White, S.J., transported from England on the *Ark* and the *Dove* ships, at St. Inigoes in present-day St. Mary's County, Maryland. Cecil Calvert - the Second Lord Baltimore and the proprietor of the colony of Maryland - had recruited White to minister to members of the displaced Catholic gentry who had migrated to Maryland seeking refuge during the English Revolution. White and other missionaries (including Thomas Copley, S.J.) also attempted to evangelize among Native Americans in the area. These missionaries acquired large tracts of land to establish tobacco plantations and export crops; by 1641, they owned 2,000 acres of land in and around St. Inigoes and had begun to establish a mission at Chapel Point, St. Thomas Manor.

Maryland, however, did not remain a refuge from anti-Catholic animus for long. In 1645, Puritans William Claiborne and Richard Ingle shut down the Jesuit missions and expelled their missionaries. With only 200 Catholics remaining, Calvert sought a compromise that enabled Catholics and Protestants to live peacefully and allow the colony to develop. The result was the 1649 Act Concerning Religion, passed by the Maryland Assembly, which accorded civil rights to both Catholics and Protestants.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 prompted Protestants to rebel against the proprietary government. In 1692, when the English government established Maryland as a royal colony, anti-Catholic measures intensified: penal laws barred Catholics from the right to hold office, practice law, and worship publicly, and Catholic ecclesiastical institutions - including the Jesuit missions - were barred from owning real estate.

The penal laws of Maryland forced missionaries to protect their property by creating trusts with sympathetic members of the gentry. Nevertheless, the Jesuits expanded their property holdings by continuing to establish tobacco plantations in Maryland, and by relying heavily on the labor of enslaved people to do so. These plantations included Newtown (Charles County, established in 1668), Bohemia (Cecil County, established in 1704), White Marsh (Prince George's County, established in 1741), and St. Joseph's Church (Talbot County, established in 1765). Enslaved laborers cleared the lands, raised crops, and tended livestock. The Jesuits also gained revenue by renting out substantial portions of their landholdings, most notably Cedar Point Neck at St. Thomas Manor, to small-scale farmers.

After the 1740s, the Jesuits began to minister to German and Irish immigrants who settled lands north and west of the Southern Maryland plantations. This led to the foundation of missions at Conewago (Adams County, Pennsylvania in 1741), Goshenhoppen (Berks County, Pennsylvania in 1741) Philadelphia (in 1747), Frederick (Frederick County, Maryland in 1765), and Deer Creek (Harford County, Maryland in 1773).

Because of the widespread nature of the Maryland mission, Jesuit missionaries often found their work isolating. In the 1690s, there were never more than seven Jesuits evangelizing in Southern

Maryland at one time. They ministered not just to the gentry but also to poor white and enslaved peoples. As the Jesuits added new missions in central Maryland and Pennsylvania, their numbers increased to approximately fifteen, a group which included German-speaking priests who could minister to German Catholic immigrants. Missionaries reported to the Vicar Apostolic in London and maintained strong ties to their fellow students from European novitiates, most notably those at the College of Bruges and College of Liège, the British novitiates located in Belgium.

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