May 1, three archbishops, twelve bishops, and two abbots at-
ed the funeral Mass in the cathedral.[64] For the 1,300 people gath-
in the cathedral, had they known it, one era was ending and an-
r beginning, for they had just listened to the sermon of the next
ɔp of Richmond.
reton had begun his episcopate under the tragic circumstances of
nan's stroke at a time when the country and Virginia were still in
midst of the Depression. He lamented at the time that more
ɔle were leaving Virginia than were entering it. By the time of his
h, the war had permanently changed the face of his diocese, the
hern part of which was then burgeoning with newcomers. Much
ıe diocese's response to this rapid expansion had been indepen-
of Ireton. But there was one area in which, if he did not take the
, he at least accepted the leadership of others—the movement to-
l racial justice in his diocese upon which his successor, Russell,
ld build.

CHAPTER 26

African Americans in the Diocese of Richmond from World War I to Integration

African American Catholics are now an integral part of the diocese of Richmond, but this was not always the case. While they were always affected by events in the diocese at large, their story is different. Bishop John J. Keane and especially Bishop Augustine van de Vyver had begun to focus on urban schools as the means of evangelizing Virginia's Blacks, so few of whom were Catholic. Denis O'Connell would encourage the expansion of that work that remained exclusively in the hand of the Josephites until his successor, Andrew Brennan, established the first parish for Blacks staffed by a priest of the diocese. Peter L. Ireton increased the number of diocesan parishes for African Americans and also introduced the Redemptorists to engage in the work. But gradually, especially after World War II, Virginia Catholics would move toward integration. Ireton, in fact, led the way by desegregating diocesan schools on the eve of the Supreme Court's Brown decision.

Josephite Work under O'Connell

Funding for work among African Americans remained meager. Catholics who were otherwise generous in their charity restricted their gifts for this apostolate. In 1901, van de Vyver told Joseph Anciaux, S.S.J., in Lynchburg: "*Do not visit* and *do not write* to Mrs. [Thomas Fortune] Ryan, New York. She will not give to colored

work."[1] Unfortunately, the annual collections for the Commission on Indian and Negro Missions continued in the 1920s to amount to less than one cent a year per Catholic. In 1907, the American bishops, under pressure from Pius X, had formed the Catholic Board for Mission Work Among the Colored People to raise funds to supplement the annual collections. In 1924, the board's director in New York, John E. Burke, made a special appeal to wealthy Catholics, but found he could count "on the fingers and toes" those who responded.[2] The diocese of Richmond reflected the national situation.

In 1915, the Josephites opened St. Joseph's Church in Alexandria. Since the first pastor, Joseph Kelly, was a friend of Katherine Drexel and had other important Philadelphia connections, he originally expected to be self-supporting,[3] but soon found himself short of funds. In 1917, O'Connell tried to transfer a grant from the Church Extension Society to a new Black mission in Newport News, only to learn that Extension gave money only to poor white missions, since Black missions received funds from the Commission on Indian and Negro Missions.[4] On occasion, tension arose even between the Josephites in regard to the allocation of commission funds. In 1913, Joseph Waring in Norfolk thought St. Joseph's in Richmond could well "take care of itself from other sources" and should therefore "waive all claims to the Indian and Negro fund and give Lynchburg and Norfolk a chance to build up."[5]

Despite financial restraints, education remained a hallmark of the Josephite churches. In the fall of 1914, O'Connell sent a gift for a school to St. Joseph's in Norfolk to supplement what the parish received from the commission. James Williams, the secretary of the parish, responded that "we feel and know that your heart and mind have always been with our people throughout your entire jurisdiction, and that you have always done whatever you could to make us good Catholics and good citizens." "The building which you have given us," he went on, "will be the avenue of furthering the advancement along educational and social lines." Waring, he reported, "has worked and is working hard and faithfully in this city where practically speaking Catholicism has been unknown among our people, but he is persuading us from one end of the city to the other that the Catholic Church is the place for us."[6]

In the summer of 1918, O'Connell submitted his report to the commission on the diocese's work among Virginia Blacks. Out of a

total Virginia population of 2,500,000, only 42,500 were Catholic. Of the 450,000 Blacks in the state, only 1,600 were Catholic. In the previous year, however, 266 adults and 99 children had been baptized. If missions were included, the diocese then had eleven churches for Black Catholics in Richmond, Norfolk, Lynchburg, Alexandria, Columbia, Cartersville, Jarratt, Keswick, Rock Castle, Jefferson, and State Farm. The pastor of St. Joseph's church in Petersburg, moreover, permitted the use of the church for Black Catholics between the Masses. The diocese then had twelve schools for African Americans. Those in Richmond, Norfolk, and Rock Castle were the largest, with 289, 250, and 300 students respectively. The other schools at Lynchburg, Alexandria, Columbia, Jarratt, and Keswick had fewer than one hundred students each. Columbia had the lowest number, thirty-eight, and had only one teacher, Lydia Elizabeth Nicholas, who would later draw Ireton's attention. In addition, Richmond also had St. Joseph's kindergarten and Holy Innocents orphanage.

Seven priests were then engaged in exclusive work with African Americans, with the Josephites having two priests in Richmond and one in Alexandria, Norfolk, and Lynchburg. At Rock Castle, there were two Holy Ghost Fathers. O'Connell also cited the exodus of African Americans from the South to the North, a pattern that would continue until the mid-1930s. While rural areas had lost the most, St. Joseph's in Richmond lost 20 percent of its congregation. At the same time, the war doubled the Black population in Portsmouth and Petersburg. On one issue, O'Connell seemed to be in agreement with van de Vyver—the need to focus on cities, which meant opening more urban schools.[7]

While schools remained the principal means of outreach to the Black community, in the summer of 1919 Vincent Warren in Norfolk completed a social hall, which had "become already the most attractive place in the city for the better class of colored people."[8] In the fall of 1919, meanwhile, the Josephites opened a new mission in Newport News, as a forerunner to a school and church. O'Connell had also purchased property in Portsmouth, whose Black population was approaching the 40,000 of Norfolk. By this time, he was shifting his focus to establish secondary education, then largely under non-Catholic auspices. As he told the commission, "you can see that if we are to hold our children and keep their faith active we must be able to give them what they can get so easily elsewhere."[9] Throughout his

episcopate, O'Connell made salaries for lay teachers the main item in the budget he submitted to the commission.

By 1922, O'Connell was confident about the wisdom of concentrating on cities, where "the interest of the negro in things Catholic is aroused and held by attractive churches and schools which rival with the churches of other denominations and with the public." Whereas Jarratt's Station had been abandoned as a Black mission and was now a "mixed" mission attended from Petersburg, St. Augustine's chapel in Richmond, formerly all white, was now a growing Black parish, soon to be in need of a school. In Richmond, moreover, the van de Vyver School of St. Joseph's had now opened a high school and a new School of Manual Training with trades and a commercial department. In Norfolk, the school was so successful that over one hundred applicants had to be turned away the previous year. In Alexandria, O'Connell wrote, two members of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, an African-American order founded in Baltimore in 1829, came over from Washington without pay to provide "great help to the struggling little parish in Alexandria where our resources are scantiest."[10]

The next year, O'Connell struck the same chord. Joseph B. Glenn, pastor of St. Joseph's in Richmond, thought the city was the metropolitan center of Virginia and the Carolinas and should have a high school that was a showpiece. Warren in Norfolk noted that "with scarcely any Catholics we endeavor to create a congregation through our school." His parish had increased from 215 in 1916 to 625 in 1923; of this number, 350 were converts.[11] In Richmond, Norfolk, and Alexandria, the pattern was virtually identical. The parishes opened high schools to compete with the local public ones and to preserve the faith of young Black Catholics. Their grammar schools educated predominantly Protestant children, but the enrollment in the high schools was almost exclusively Catholic.[12] O'Connell's successors, Brennan and Ireton, would continue this policy of focusing on education.

Not everyone was pleased with the Josephite success in educating Blacks. At a parish picnic in 1926, a car full of Klansmen drove up and kidnapped Father Warren. After driving him around for a while, however, they released him unharmed. But, if they hoped to scare him or the African Americans off from education, they failed. Appearing none the worse for wear, Warren reported a short time later that "from the Princess Anne section (where we met the Klan) a distance

of 25 miles from the school, we have this year 25 pupils who make the trip daily; and not one of them a Catholic as yet. Before the manifestation of the Klan animosity we had only one from there. It is from this section that we had to refuse so many applicants."[13]

In 1927, Bishop Brennan, O'Connell's successor, called schools the "principal hope for the future." The van de Vyver school complex had made an impact. "Never before," Brennan wrote, "has Richmond been so immune from bigotry as it is today." But in Norfolk, the situation was different. St. Joseph's school had been condemned by the fire department and had to turn away 200 students. In Alexandria, St. Joseph's Church had had a school for nine years with eighty-five students in eight grades. Out of the total Black population of 4,000, however, only 161 were Catholic.[14]

In regard to educational work, St. Emma's and St. Francis de Sales continued to represent one of Virginia's premier endeavors. On October 24, 1928, Dennis Cardinal Dougherty of Philadelphia agreed to dedicate the new chapel at St. Emma's.[15] Bishops William Hafey of Raleigh, Patrick J. Barry of St. Augustine, Richard O. Gerow of Natchez, and Emmett M. Walsh of Charleston agreed to come.[16] Although Bishop Brennan and these other prelates openly promoted education for Black Americans, they were not so progressive in seeking Black vocations to the priesthood.

The Question of a Black Priest for Richmond

Late in December 1921, O'Connell received a letter from Peter Jenser, provincial of the Divine Word Fathers, describing the education of Black seminarians. Jenser was convinced that an African-American clergy was necessary, if African Americans were to be converted. With considerable prescience, he said, "The race problem has become a troublesome one and may lead to a crisis" for which he thought "the best solution would be to make the negro CATHOLIC. It is his birthright as much as ours, of which he has been too long deprived."[17] Unfortunately, O'Connell left no record of his response.

In 1927, however, William L. Lane, a graduate of St. Emma's at Rock Castle and at that time a seminarian at St. Vincent's Archabbey in Latrobe, applied to Bishop Brennan to study for Richmond. Brennan turned him down, but Lane was accepted by Bishop Joseph

Schrembs of Cleveland. Two years later, however, Schrembs notified the young man that Cleveland would have no need for him. Lane again wrote Brennan to say that, although the bishop's original reply in 1927 "was in the negative, . . . it was so encouraging because it seemed as tho you went further to wish me God's blessing and your interest in a Race clergy among my people."[18] Brennan once again, however, rejected his application. Lane, nevertheless, found the bishop's letter "encouraging to read, even tho you cannot see the way clear just now to accept me for work in your diocese, that you are interested in the question of a race clergy. I feel certain that once the members of the American Hierarchy become interested in the matter, the beginning of a solution will be at hand."[19]

In October 1930, Lane took his case to Archbishop Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi, the apostolic delegate, and had Dr. Thomas Wyatt Turner of the Hampton Institute also write the delegate on his behalf. Fumasoni-Biondi then interceded with Archbishop John T. McNicholas, O.P., of Cincinnati, who finally agreed to accept Lane on trial in his seminary, Mount St. Mary's of the West. That plan also failed, and finally Lane completed his theological studies at Latrobe for Archbishop Pius Downing of Trinidad. He was ordained in New York in 1933.[20] Lane would later pass through the diocese and make a series of proposals for work with African Americans. His rejection by Brennan as well as northern bishops, however, indicates that racism was not limited to the diocese of Richmond and the South.

The diocese may not yet have been ready to ordain an African American priest, but that did not prevent one of Richmond's seminarians in Rome from proposing one. Vincent Waters was completing his final year of theology in November 1931, when he wrote Brennan that he had met a Black student, who had been rejected by the Society of the Most Holy Trinity and was then studying at his own expense in Rome. Waters thought him to be

> a very promising young fellow, quite cultured, speaks English perfectly without any dialect and seems to be fired with zeal to do something among his own people in the United States. Personally I believe he will have little trouble getting under the Propagation of the Faith and into the Urban College but if he continues in his present mind he will be anxious to get into some southern diocese in the States during the next year or so. Should you be interested in him I could give you more particulars."[21]

Apparently, however, Brennan was not interested in even a Roman-trained Black seminarian. For some years to come, Virginia's Black Catholics would be served by white priests.

Work of Diocesan Priests with African Americans: Our Lady of Victory

The concern for Virginia's African Americans was not limited to the Josephites. Early in 1930, Harold Nott, whose older brother, Walter, was the director of Catholic Charities, was then studying in Rome. He informed Bishop Brennan that he had offered a novena in honor of the bishop's recent silver jubilee "for the conversion of the negroes in our diocese." He added that he and Bernard Moore, another Richmond seminarian, had often discussed "the possible conversion of those poor souls and have both expressed a hope that you will find work for us to do among them. We feel that we can do much good among them as we have been brought up in their midst."[22]

Neither Nott nor Moore would be assigned as priests specifically to work with African Americans, but in 1931 Brennan did open the first parish for Black Catholics under a diocesan priest. Nicholas Habets, an alumnus of Fribourg who had served in Fairfax, established Our Lady of Victory in Portsmouth, property for which O'Connell had earlier purchased. In February 1931, he reported that "the more I am in this work, the better I like it but also the better I see your guided wisdom in refraining and limiting my activity to this place alone."[23] By September 1932, in the midst of the Depression, his parishioners had increased from twenty to eighty-four; he had baptized twenty adults and one child; and his school, staffed by three Daughters of Charity, had three grades with 140 students, of whom only fifteen were Catholic.[24] Habets was following the Josephite strategy of using schools as vehicles for evangelization.

Habets was determined that his parishioners be considered an integral of the Catholic community. On November 27–29, 1933, the Daughters of Charity held a triduum in honor of Catherine Labouré, a member of their congregation in France who had recently been beatified. The celebration began with the rosary, a sermon, and solemn benediction at Sacred Heart Church in Norfolk. On the following days, there were ceremonies at St. Paul's Church in Portsmouth and St. Mary's Church in Norfolk, where Bishop Brennan officiated. All

of these parishes were staffed by the Daughters of Charity, and an invitation was "extended to all the people of Norfolk and Portsmouth to participate and share in the special graces to be bestowed on this occasion."[25] But here was where harmony ended.

Habets had not attended the celebration and received a reprimand from Bishop Brennan. He explained that, after the first planning meeting of the daughters, Sister Madeleine, D.C., from Our Lady of Victory refused to attend another when she learned that their parishioners were excluded from the celebration. Habets had declined an invitation to be the celebrant of the solemn benediction at St. Paul's, because he had no connection with the parish. He would have consented to have a role in the Pontifical High Mass at St. Mary's, he told the bishop, "but no function was offered me." Warren had been invited, he observed, but "they had not to fear an influx of colored participants as his school is not staffed by the Daughters of Charity." As part of the celebration, there were "pilgrimages," but, he added, "the fear was imminent that a Negro parade would follow the Lily-white pilgrimage. They said there would be no room. Of course there was no room as it was planned to fill the churches otherwise."[26]

Habets went on to give his reactions to the racist attitudes among the clergy and religious. "If our priests and religious take that attitude and believe in time-serving and are opportunists in this color-question," he stated, "then we must not be surprised at the hostile attitude of the lay people who call white people worshiping in colored churches 'Irish niggers' or say that the Sisters bring a shame upon their holy habit by teaching 'Black lips' or that those Sisters have been missioned to a colored school to expiate some crime committed in their community." Far from being an isolated incident, he asserted, "priests have expressed themselves many a time adverse to this missionary endeavour. Even from the beginning we had to cope with it." In June 1931, the sisters had wanted to put on a show for the children at St. Joseph's Academy in Portsmouth, only to be turned down. They then obtained permission from the superior of the asylum in Norfolk, but Father F. Joseph Magri, the pastor in Portsmouth, saw them on the way and attempted to have Edward Brosnan, pastor of St. Mary's, stop them. Habets concluded that he hoped his explanation would assuage "the surprise" the bishop had "expressed at my absence."[27]

How accurate Habets was in his assessment of the attitudes of the other clergy is difficult to assess. He himself remained at Our Lady of Victory until 1952, when he became the second pastor of Star of the Sea in Virginia Beach and was replaced in Portsmouth by Albert F. Pereira. In the meantime, as will be seen, Ireton also established St. Augustine's in Richmond as a Black parish, staffed by a diocesan priest, R. Dixon Beattie.

Josephite Work during the Depression

Meanwhile, although the Depression caused revenues from the Commission for Indian and Negro Missions to diminish, Josephite work continued to expand. In September 1932, Glenn reported that St. Joseph's in Richmond then had 672 parishioners, with its missions in Columbia and Cartersville having a total of sixteen. Over the year, he had baptized ninety people, including seventy-one adult converts. Schools, however, still remained a prime focus, with 636 as a total enrollment, of whom fifty-eight were then in Columbia. His schools were staffed by eleven sisters and two lay teachers, and his night school had five lay teachers. But it was difficult to provide exact statistics for his parish, he said, because unemployment caused the people constantly to move.[28]

In Alexandria, Kelly informed Brennan that his parishioners then numbered 184, but they too were feeling the effects of the Depression. Although many were trained mechanics, they had to accept positions as unskilled workers. Moreover, he stated, "the wage rate among the colored is much lower than the rate given to whites for the same kind of work performed." He had, nevertheless, opened his new school in October 1931, with eighty-nine students, of whom one-third were Protestant.[29] For the remainder of the 1930s, the Black Catholic population slowly increased, but a significant pattern emerged. In 1933, there were 70 girls and 38 boys in Richmond's van de Vyver high school, and 183 girls and 159 boys in the grammar school. Education in Richmond's African American community seemed to be more desirable for girls than for boys. Glenn also commented that the Church was drawing converts from the professional classes that "will soon establish for us a leadership in the Community." Those who frequented his school, moreover, were the children of Protestant ministers and public-school teachers, as a result of which Glenn reported, "the voice of bigotry is no longer heard among us; on the contrary many

are the signs of respect and esteem shown us constantly by our non-Catholic Negro brethren."[30] The annual reports from the Josephites to the bishop for preparation of the appeal for funds from the commission on Indian and Negro Missions provide a year-by-year account of work among Black Virginians. Unfortunately, Warren's reports for Norfolk do not exist, but, from those that are extant, especially Glenn's for Richmond, the pattern continued of a gradual increase in Black parishioners, with girls outnumbering boys in school enrollment.

Early in 1937, Ireton, then the coadjutor of Richmond, sought to gain information on the number of Black Catholics in non-Black parishes.[31] The response was disappointing. Few parishes had any Black parishioners, and many had none.[32] In January 1940, at the request of the apostolic delegate, Ireton took a census of the Black Catholics in the diocese. There were at the time 2,090 in the six parishes for Black Catholics: St. Joseph's and St. Augustine's, in Richmond, St. Joseph's in Norfolk, St. Joseph's in Alexandria, Our Lady of Victory in Portsmouth, and Holy Family, about to be opened in Petersburg. In addition, there were 225 attending other parishes.[33] After over seventy years of outreach to the African-American community, the diocese of Richmond had still reached only a small minority.

The work of the diocese among Black Catholics was further hampered by its perennial lack of priests. Early in 1939, Father William Lane, who had earlier applied for and been rejected by the diocese, gave a mission in Portsmouth and discovered thirty Catholic students at the Hampton Institute. He recommended more missions at Black parishes and a chaplain for the institute. He also seems again to have offered his services to the diocese. Ireton acknowledged the need for more missions but pointed out that the situation of the students at the Hampton Institute was similar to that of white students at other colleges in the state. "There are," he wrote, "a hundred and fifty or more students at the College of William and Mary with no resident priest at Williamsburg" and "there is almost an equal number in Lexington, at Washington and Lee and Virginia Military Institute, and likewise no resident priest." Granted that the diocese was strapped for funds as well as personnel, he concluded that he could not hold out hope for Lane to work in the diocese.[34] The time still had not come for Richmond to break the color barrier in regard to its clergy.

During World War II, however, the diocese increased its work with African Americans, as Ireton opened more parishes for them. It

was a policy of separate but equal that his successor would reverse. The war, moreover, would have a direct effect on the status of African Americans within American society.

First Rumblings of Racial Justice

On November 1, 1939, Pope Pius XII addressed *Sertum laetitiae* to the American hierarchy on the occasion of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the naming of John Carroll as the first American bishop. Commending the progress of the Church and its implementation of social teaching, the pope particularly noted:

> We confess that We feel a special paternal affection, which is certainly inspired by heaven, for the Negro people dwelling among you; for in the field of religion and education We know they need special care and comfort and are very deserving of it. We therefore invoke an abundance of heavenly blessing and We pray success for those whose generous zeal is devoted to their welfare.[35]

Later in November, after the annual meeting of the hierarchy, Samuel A. Stritch, then archbishop of Milwaukee and chairman of the administrative board of the NCWC, and Emmett M. Walsh, bishop of Charleston and chairman of the NCWC committee on lay organizations, addressed a letter to Dr. Thomas Wyatt Turner, chairman of the biology department at Hampton Institute and president of the Federation of Colored Catholics. They commended him for his report on the Federation's work in "helping to right the social wrongs of our brothers by promoting a wider and deeper knowledge and practice of Christian social justice and charity." Quoting Pius XII's statement on African Americans, they concluded that "it were a sham Christianity were we to try to exclude from the embrace of justice any man, or to make our charity narrower than the outstretched arms of Christ on Calvary."[36] In view of Turner's prominence as Virginia's most outstanding Black Catholic, it is curious that there is no extant correspondence between him and any bishop of Richmond. Regardless of the lack of such documentation, however, the diocese seemed to take to heart the words of Pius XII and the letter from Stritch and Walsh.

Despite the distractions of the war, the diocese of Richmond took the first steps toward racial equality in the early 1940s. It actively participated in the Catholic Committee on the South and in the nascent movement for interracial justice.

The Catholic Committee on the South and Paul Williams

In 1936, Howard W. Odum of the University of North Carolina published his *Southern Regions of the United States.* It was an indictment of the South, which contained 61 percent of the eroded land in the nation and whose wages and income lagged between 30 and 50 percent behind the rest of the nation. In 1938, President Franklin Roosevelt called the region the nation's worst economic problem. The president's concern gave rise to the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, a biracial organization that anticipated the later civil rights movement. Because the conference also welcomed Marxist radicals, however, Paul D. Williams, a young Catholic layman of Richmond and active member of St. Paul's parish, decided to organize the Catholic Committee on the South (CCS). His job as a traveling representative of a publishing company took him throughout most of the South, where he made friends with clergy and lay leaders alike. He first discussed his proposals with Monsignor John A. Ryan, director of the Social Action Department of the NCWC, and his assistant, Father Raymond McGowan. Ryan suggested that Williams organize a Southern program for the National Social Action Congress to be held on June 12–14, 1939, in Cleveland.[37]

At the congress, Williams arranged for two forums, one on the Industrial South and the other on the Agricultural South. The entire congress heard Bishop Gerald O'Hara of Savannah deliver the ringing words: "You have heard President Roosevelt say the South is the country's No. 1 economic problem. Let me say to you that the South is the Church's No. 1 religious opportunity." O'Hara based his optimistic assessment on the increase in converts and interest on the part of state universities in Catholic social teaching.[38] Ireton joined O'Hara, Williams, and Father T. James McNamara in forming the nucleus of the new organization, the CCS.

At its first convention in Atlanta, in April 1940, the CCS established five departments: Industrial, Rural, Education, Negro, and

Youth. As the executive secretary, Williams made sure the CCS had representatives at meetings of other Southern reform groups, such as the Southern Cooperative Region Meeting and the Virginia Interracial Convention. His purpose was to inform the people of the South, where the Church constituted such a small minority, of Catholic teaching and help break down prejudice.[39] Increasingly, the CCS focused its attention on racism.

In April 1942, Richmond hosted the third convention of the CCS. The chairman for the convention was Thomas E. O'Connell, pastor of St. Paul's Church in Richmond, who later became an outspoken advocate of racial equality. In preparation, Williams asked Ireton to enlist the support of Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel of New Orleans and Bishops William L. Adrian of Nashville, Daniel F. Desmond of Alexandria, Louisiana, Emmet M. Walsh of Charleston, Jules B. Jeanmard of Lafayette, Mississippi, and Francis W. Howard of Covington, Kentucky.[40] Ireton urged all the priests of the diocese to attend the convention, which he substituted for that year's annual clergy conference.[41] In addition, the school superintendents of all the southern dioceses would hold their annual meeting in conjunction with the convention.

Ireton, in the meantime, invited Henry Wallace, vice president of the United States, to address the convention. He pointed out that "there is the danger that ugly radicalism might be the sequel to a brutal economic colonialism." While Wallace declined the invitation, Frances Perkins, secretary of labor, was part of a panel on "Labor and Industry and Family Life in the South." The convention heard addresses from Archbishop Samuel Stritch, who had been transferred to Chicago, Dr. Frank Graham, president of the University of North Carolina and a member of the War Labor Board, Howard Odum, and Father Francis J. Haas, a leading labor mediator.[42] Another panel treated the topic of "The Negro in National Defense." The participants included Thomas W. Turner and L. R. Reynolds, director of the Virginia Commission on Interracial Cooperation. After the panel discussion, Father Edward Murphy, dean of philosophy at Xavier University in New Orleans, stated that "to be anti-Semitic or anti-Negro is to be anti-Christian" and urged Catholics to join the Urban League and the NAACP. The CCS then gave its second annual award to Mother Katherine Drexel, whose Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament continued to operate St. Francis de Sales High School at Rock Castle—the first award had gone to George Washington Carver the previous year. According to one participant, the public took little notice

that the assembly at the award ceremony was integrated.[43] Governor Colgate Darden also addressed the meeting and declared that "the Catholic Church stands today, as it has stood for centuries, like a rock in a wasting world." He predicted that once peace came, the Church would "play a magnificent part in bringing back to exhausted and weary people" an opportunity for "a finer and a cleaner and a better life."[44]

Unfortunately, the CCS was always hampered by financial restraints. In 1943, Williams resigned as executive secretary, frustrated at the lack of funding that forced him to withdraw the CCS from membership in agencies such as the Southern Governors Conference, the Southern Policy Committee, and the Southern Conference on Race Relations. In his letter of resignation, however, he urged that in the postwar South the CCS should align itself with the progressive, regional thinkers and combat the opportunists, such as the communists and socialists. Anticommunism became a hallmark for the CCS as it was for most American Catholics. Yet the committee continued to promote the rights of labor in the South and became more outspoken in calling for desegregation. At its convention in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1951, it passed a resolution calling for "ultimate integration." The committee's support of unions and desegregation set it apart from most white Southerners, but its strong anticommunism protected it from being attacked. The Columbia convention, however, was the high-water mark of the committee. It held its last convention in Richmond in April 1953, when it passed no resolutions but issued a statement written by the Southern bishops. Bishop John J. Russell of Charleston was the episcopal chairman, and he authorized the various departments to publish workshop ideas and suggestions, but these were not to be considered official statements unless they had the approval of the Board of Governors.[45]

While the CCS ceased to exist as a cohesive regional force within the Church by 1954, Williams's pioneering work in Richmond helped create an atmosphere for the diocese to move toward desegregation and prepare it for later participation in the civil rights movement. He was, moreover, also active in developing interracial work in Richmond.

Interracial Work in the Diocese of Richmond

On April 18, 1941, the Virginia Commission on Interracial Cooperation held its twenty-second annual conference in Richmond at St.

Paul's Episcopal Church. R. L. Reynolds, the director of the commission, enlisted the assistance of Williams and Vincent Waters, the chancellor, to have Father John T. Gillard, S.S.J., a noted writer on interracial justice, participate.[46] Invited to respond to a paper on training African Americans for industry,[47] Gillard readily agreed and pointed to the problem that the Catholic Committee on the South was beginning to address. In Baltimore, he noted, builders would not hire Negroes because they were not in unions, and unions would not admit them because they were not officially trained. "We got two union brick-layers on the Notre Dame [of Maryland] library building," he continued, "but the white union men quit. So there you are. In the meantime the Communists are making strides among the Negroes."[48] Waters, meanwhile, asked Reynolds to invite other priests.[49] As a result, both Nicholas Habets, pastor of Our Lady of Victory in Portsmouth, and James Albert, S.S.J., pastor of St. Joseph's in Norfolk, were on the program.

Asking Albert to explain the work of the Josephites, Waters pointed out the significance of the invitation, for "this year is the first time we as Catholics have been asked to participate in the Conference and of course we have not been given any of the principal addresses but our time will come and I figure we should not waste all our thunder this year on some secondary place in the program. A short report will make a better impression." Gillard would respond to one of the formal papers, he continued, and Reynolds wanted Albert on the program to enlist his interest in starting a commission on interracial cooperation in Norfolk.[50]

Catholic participation in the annual convention of the Virginia Commission on Interracial Cooperation seems to have been the occasion formally to launch a standing committee on Catholic Interracial Cooperation, which held its second annual meeting in Richmond on February 11, 1942.[51] The guiding forces were again Williams and Waters. By late 1943, just before he left the office of chancellor to become head of the mission band, Waters had also organized a number of interracial roundtable discussion groups.[52]

New Parishes for African Americans

Although Ireton was noted for delegating administrative duties to his subordinates, he took a personal interest in the welfare of Virginia's

African Americans. Early in 1937, he had already asked his priests to provide him with statistics on the number of Black Catholics in white parishes.[53] Three years later, he informed his clergy that there were a total of 902 Black families in the diocese with 73 in white parishes.[54] He now set about to increase those numbers. His work drew the favorable attention of the national board of Indian and Negro Missions which on several occasions gave him more than his requested allotment of $4,000, sometimes as much as $15,000, to be used at his own discretion.[55] These funds he used for new Black parishes. Late in 1941, he invited the Redemptorists to the diocese to take over St. Augustine's in Richmond, founded in 1937, and to establish an additional mission early in 1942. He also planned to open Black parishes in Newport News, Roanoke, and Lynchburg.[56] Two years later, however, Father Cornelius Hoffman, C.Ss.R., at St. Augustine's had still not established a new mission in Richmond, but had selected Church Hill as the site for what became Holy Rosary.[57] In 1945, the Redemptorists had begun a St. Alphonsus mission in Newport News, and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate had started Holy Family Church in Petersburg. In the meantime, Our Lady of Victory in Portsmouth had 309 parishioners with 430 students enrolled in its grammar and high schools.[58] While other orders assisted in this work among Black Catholics, notably the Holy Ghost Fathers who staffed both Rock Castle and the new parish of Our Lady Queen of Peace in Arlington, the Redemptorists would take on most of the responsibility for new parishes.

In June 1946, the Redemptorists founded a parish for Black Catholics in Roanoke. Maurice J. McDonald, C.Ss.R., a former Army chaplain, the first pastor, purchased a home to use for a rectory and chapel. Because he signed the contract on October 15, the feast of St. Gerard Majella, a Redemptorist, he chose that saint as the patron of the parish.[59] Less than a year later, a group of Catholics in nearby Salem petitioned Ireton for a church. In April 1948, the Redemptorists now had charge of both the Black and white people in that town. Temporarily they used facilities of Roanoke College until they transported an old Army chapel from Durham, North Carolina, to become the Chapel of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. From the beginning, there was no segregated seating.[60] Salem continued to be a mission of St. Gerard's until it became an independent parish in 1963.

Late in April 1948, Ireton instructed Robert Hickman, the chancellor, to compile the records of the work with African-American

parishes with particular attention to the number of converts. The result of Hickman's survey was the list below of converts for 1947, with the total number of converts from the date of the beginning of each parish or the earliest date at which records were available.

Church	*Converts in 1947*	*Total conversions*
St. Joseph's, Richmond	16	1896–1947 = 2,234
St. Joseph's, Norfolk	30	1897–1947 = 1,693
St. Joseph's, Alexandria	16	1916–47 = 265
Our Lady of Victory, Portsmouth	23	1930–47 = 325
Holy Family, Petersburg	12	1940–47 = 59
Queen of Peace, Arlington	8	1945–47 = 12
St. Augustine's, Richmond	12	1935–47 = 104
St. Alphonsus, Newport News	6	1944–47 = 26
St. Gerard's, Roanoke	3	1946–47 = 3
St. Francis de Sales, Lynchburg	0	1908–47 = 45[61]

By 1951, the Redemptorists extended their work farther north in the Shenandoah Valley when they took over the missions of Holy Infant in Elkton and Our Lady of the Valley in Luray, neither of which was for African Americans. In August 1953 they established another mission for Black Catholics in Charlottesville, St. Margaret Mary. They purchased a Methodist church which they then renovated. Raymond Schantz, C.SS.R., former assistant at St. Alphonsus in Newport News, was named pastor and resided temporarily at Holy Comforter.[62] St. Margaret Mary would be short-lived, but even in the beginning there were tensions. In September 1954, Raymond Govern, C.SS.R., the superior in Elkton, petitioned Ireton to allow Schantz to have a second Mass at St. Margaret Mary.[63] Justin McClunn, the chancellor, replied that, since the church drew only about sixty-five people on Sunday, only forty of whom were Black, he saw no need for a second Mass.[64] In December 1955, Bishop Joseph Hodges, the auxiliary, dedicated the renovated church, next to which a house had been purchased to serve as a rectory and social center.[65]

In 1950, Ireton had recruited missionary Sisters of Verona, Italy, to work with the Redemptorists at St. Augustine's and Church Hill in Richmond.[66] Three years later, the sisters joined the Redemptorists in

Roanoke.[67] In 1953, the Church Hill community formally became Holy Rosary parish, though it would not have a permanent church for another decade. For the previous two years, the people had met for worship in the home of Mr. and Mrs. George Pollard. The Redemptorists at St. Augustine had, meanwhile, established a mission of St. Gerard in South Richmond in a former Baptist church.[68]

The Diocese Moves Toward Integration

Despite some advance in work among Black Virginians, however, early in 1944 *The Catholic Virginian* addressed the racial prejudice that still existed among Catholics. Noting the work of many priests and nuns among African Americans, the paper reported that "we have a number of white Catholics in this diocese who by coldness, discourtesy and unfairness towards Negroes are making them distrust and dislike the faith these so-called Catholics profess. Such Catholics are on the devil's side, doing *his* work. The question is: Which side are you on?"[69] But the tide was beginning to turn. In February 1948, Father Thomas E. O'Connell of St. Paul's in Richmond joined several other religious leaders to speak before the Virginia House Courts of the Justice Committee which was then considering five bills that would end segregation in meetings between races and in transportation. He noted that the Holy Name Society had already held an integrated convention in Richmond in October 1947, when white and Black Catholics went to Mass, met, and ate together. But, he noted, "we were violating the laws of Virginia." Now, he was having difficulty in finding a location for the next year's convention because of state laws. For O'Connell, "no true American can defend these barriers, since colored men and women were called upon to defend America and risk their lives in defense of a common flag. They, therefore, have a right to the fundamental liberties symbolized in that flag."[70]

In the meantime, Ireton mirrored the concerns of the rest of the hierarchy about communist infiltration in some African-American groups. In July 1947, Archbishop James Francis A. McIntyre, the coadjutor of New York, and later archbishop of Los Angeles, wrote to the hierarchy that he was "informed that the United Negro and Allied Veterans of America is a Communist Front Organization, working almost exclusively among Negro veterans of World War II,

endeavoring to prove that the Negro veterans of the South are being discriminated against and are unable to obtain Government applications to apply for their terminal leave pay." The Catholic War Veterans offered to furnish the necessary application blanks for this pay, and, in this way, "the Church may be able to help combat and counteract the dangers of this un-American organization which uses these blanks as a foil to enlist the Negro veterans in the Communist party." Ireton simply turned McIntyre's letter over to Robert Hickman, his chancellor, who changed the wording slightly and forwarded it to every pastor over the bishop's signature.[71]

While anticommunism was a hallmark of the Church and the Catholic Committee on the South in the postwar years, others also saw this danger. As an attorney for the NAACP in the 1950s, Thurgood Marshall, later a Supreme Court Justice, was passing on information to the FBI about possible communist infiltration of Black organizations.[72]

Although it would be some years before Virginia was integrated, the diocese helped prepare the way early in 1949 by actively participating in the voter registration drive of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). W. Lester Banks of the Virginia NAACP had written Ireton asking his "cooperation, support and guidance" in the campaign.[73] Ireton urged his Black parishes to join in the endeavor. In a letter to all their pastors, he quoted Banks's letter, which pointed out that, while in 1947 Virginia's Black population was estimated to be 693,728 of whom 350,000 were over 21, the voting age, only 50,000 "had met the first requirements of First Class Citizenship, i.e. payment of three consecutive years of poll taxes." In cooperation with the Voters League, the NAACP was launching a campaign to increase that number to 100,000 by 1949. To qualify, the potential voters would have to pay the poll taxes, register, and then vote in every election. Moreover, they should "join the NAACP to help secure equal protection under the Constitution of the United States for all, regardless of color, race or creed." Ireton informed the pastors that each parish would receive a chart with the names of those who had become registered voters, to be hung in the church vestibule.[74]

Ireton also supported the campaign in 1950 led by Henry L. Caravati to promote a memorial at the birthplace of Booker T. Washington. Introducing Caravati to Archbishops John J. Mitty of San Francisco

and McIntyre of Los Angeles, he noted the campaign had "the backing of all who are interested in the welfare of the colored."[75]

One of Ireton's most significant actions to further race relations was his obtaining for Mrs. Lydia Elizabeth Nicholas the papal medal *pro ecclesia et pontifice.* He may actually have considered her for the honor as early as 1937. At least that was when he first met her and wrote to her. In a moving account of her life, she noted that her maiden name was O'Hare and her mother's maiden name was Burke, "both Irish names, so at home they used to call us 'Smoked Irish.' You see they were slaves [in Louisville, Kentucky] but belonged to good Catholic slave holders who saw that they were well reared in the Faith." She had been born in Mechanicsburg, Ohio, where "we were the only colored Catholics in the place we attended, St. Michael's Church. It is to these good Catholic people that I owe everything." In 1905, Father Charles Hannigan, S.S.J., had recruited her to teach in the one-room school in Columbia.[76]

Whatever may have been the context of her original correspondence with Ireton in 1937, fourteen years later she became the first woman in Virginia to receive the papal medal, in acknowledgment of her forty-six years of service as a teacher in Columbia. She accepted the award at the commencement ceremony at the parochial school of St. Joseph's Church on June 5, 1951.[77] Father Carroll Dozier, diocesan director of the Propagation of the Faith, preached. On July 2, Ireton expressed his gratitude for the award to Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini, substitute secretary of state to Pius XII, who later became Pope Paul VI. "Our secular press and the Negro press carried unusual publicity in recognition of the honor conferred," he wrote; "the Catholic diocesan papers in every section of the country featured the event; for an EVENT the occasion was."[78]

By far the most dramatic of Ireton's actions in regard to African Americans, however, was his decision to integrate the Catholic schools. As early as January 1951, the Catholic Committee on the South, at its meeting in Columbia, South Carolina, had called for integration.[79] In March 1953, Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel of New Orleans published a pastoral letter prohibiting racial discrimination in churches and diocesan organizations. In June of that year, Vincent Waters, by then the bishop of Raleigh, banned segregated churches and pews.[80] But Ireton was the first bishop in the South to integrate his schools.

On May 7, 1954, shortly before the Supreme Court's Brown decision, Ireton addressed the First Friday Club in Richmond on the

question of integration. According to some sources, he chose his topic only in the car on his way to the meeting. He said Catholics should accept the court's decision when it came, but he added a more spiritual argument. Since the van de Vyver High School would soon close, he noted that there would no longer be a Catholic school for Richmond's African Americans. Yet, he continued, Catholic parents had an obligation to provide Catholic education. "Consequently," he declared, "we Catholics have the obligation of attempting to provide a Catholic education for them in the Catholic high schools of Richmond." He also reported that on April 30 the pastors who made up the board of Norfolk Catholic High School had already resolved that, if St. Joseph's High School for black students in Norfolk remained open, Norfolk Catholic would not admit any black students, because it "would be an injustice to St. Joseph's High School." If, however, St. Joseph's closed to make way for a proposed development project, "then any Catholic colored graduate of the eighth grade living within the area serviced by the high school will be admitted."[81] His statement was published a week later in *The Catholic Virginian,* from which *The Richmond News-Leader* picked it up and published it on the front page.[82] The secular newspaper further noted that the Catholic desegregation plan would go into effect in the fall regardless of the Supreme Court's pending decision.[83]

As he implemented Ireton's decision, Monsignor J. Louis Flaherty, the diocesan superintendent of schools, stated it was "in accord with Christian principles," a statement that received national acclaim.[84] In Richmond, thirteen black students from St. Joseph's parochial school were admitted to the Catholic high schools.[85] Other sections of the diocese immediately heeded Ireton's call for integration. In the fall of 1954, Flaherty reported that thirteen black students were already enrolled in three schools in Roanoke and between forty and sixty were attending the Catholic schools in the Arlington-Falls Church area.[86] *The Southern School News,* which monitored school desegregation in the South, quoted Flaherty as saying that integration "has worked out magnificently, without a ripple of discontent." He noted, however, that several white children did not return to the integrated schools. But the paper pointed out that there were only thirty-nine black students out of a total of 3,527 enrolled in four high schools and six elementary schools, with the highest ratio being six black students out of an enrollment of 138.[87] By the end of the academic year 1954–55, the *News* reported that the diocese then had sixty black students enrolled

in fourteen elementary and high schools and that only fourteen white children in seven schools had been withdrawn by their parents.[88]

In 1955, the board of Norfolk Catholic, with Ireton's approval, voted to accept black students in the fall and issued a statement of confidence "that present pupils will recall the handicaps under which many of the newer pupils shall have labored, that any violation of the virtues of Charity and Justice is a serious breach of Christian morality, and that all will cooperate for the benefit of the high school."[89] Within the context of Virginia at the time, it was a bold decision. In 1956, the General Assembly held a special session to consider a bill withholding funds from local school systems that had integrated public schools. Addressing a joint committee of the Senate and House of Delegates, Adele Clark presented a resolution of the Richmond Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, of which she was an official, and reminded the legislators that the Virginia constitution provided for free public schools.[90]

In 1957, under the direction of Senator Harry F. Byrd, the state's Democratic boss, Virginia adopted a policy of "massive resistance." The legislature passed laws to circumvent the Brown decision. If Virginia's public schools were forced to integrate, they would be closed to all, and the state would support individual students in segregated, "private" schools. Some Catholics favored this stratagem. The journalistic spearhead of the movement was James Jackson Kilpatrick, Jr., editorial page editor of *The Richmond News Leader.* A convert to Catholicism, he had received instructions from Father Thomas E. O'Connell, a pioneer voice for integration, but would later leave the Church over the issue of integration. In 1955, he began calling for "interposition," that is for Virginia and other Southern states to interpose their sovereignty against the Federal government.[91]

Virginia's "massive resistance" drew the attention of the national Catholic press. Commenting on it in *America,* on September 20, 1958, Wilfrid Parsons, S.J., reminded his readers that "incidentally, Virginia's Catholic schools have been desegregated since early in May 1954, two weeks before the Supreme Court's decision, by decree of the late Bishop Peter L. Ireton."[92] By February 1959, Virginia's "massive resistance" was over. Both federal and state courts had declared its laws against integration unconstitutional, but Virginia still had a long way to go. Danville made the *New York Times* on May 21, 1960, when it closed its public library rather than allow African Americans to

enter—the library opened again on September 12, but removed all chairs, so that patrons, black and white, could only take books out![93]

In 1958, Ireton had died, but his successor, John J. Russell, found the groundwork already laid for a forthright campaign for racial equality. He would take a different approach, closing many of the Black parishes Ireton had founded. In retrospect, however, the new era had already dawned in Richmond. On May 27, 1956, Father Theophilus Brown, O.S.B., had said his first Mass at St. Joseph's, with both Bishop Ireton and Bishop Waters in attendance. A native of Richmond and convert, Brown was the first parishioner of St. Joseph's to be ordained a priest, though not for the diocese, but for St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, where he served until coming to Mary Mother of the Church Abbey in Richmond.[94] He symbolized the long quest of Virginia's Black Catholics for equality within the Church they loved and served.