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## From Assimilation to Integration: The 20th Century Transformation of Red Cloud Indian School

Victoria Smith

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## Chapter One: The Gatekeepers

### Introduction

In determining why RCIS underwent such a significant transition during the 1960's and 1970's, it is integral to take into account the role of the Jesuits of Holy Rosary Mission as agents of change, working in tandem with the government and the Lakota people. The Jesuits were beholden to the United States government due to the financial support it provided through student contracts for much of the twentieth century. They were similarly dependent on the will of the Pine Ridge Lakota whose children filled their enrollment quotas. However, they exercised a great deal of their own influence, as they were the ones who officially controlled the school and made the ultimate decisions concerning its upkeep and future direction. Thus, even if the Jesuits were not primary activists calling for the change that occurred, they nonetheless played a significant role as gatekeepers to change, and it was their compliance to the forces around them that created the foundation for the RCIS of the present.

By the time the Jesuits established Holy Rosary Mission, their order already had a long and storied history of adapting their mode of proselytization to the specific contexts within which its missionaries found themselves. This accommodationist approach was a mainstay of the Jesuit missionary strategy, as shown by myriad scholarly works documenting cases of accommodation in the Jesuit missions of Asia, South America, and North America. In Ross Enoch's study of Holy Rosary Mission from the school's foundation in 1886 to 1945, he demonstrates that the Jesuit work among the Pine Ridge Lakota was no exception.<sup>1</sup> I build upon this work in order to posit that the Jesuit lenience towards indigenous culture served to make the Jesuit leaders within the mission more amenable to the idea of integrating progressively more aspects of Lakota

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<sup>1</sup> Ross Alexander Enochs, *The Jesuit Mission to the Lakota Sioux: A Study of Pastoral Ministry, 1886-1945*, (New York, NY: Sheed and Ward, 1996).

culture and spirituality into RCIS. Within the Catholic church at large, the Second Vatican Council and the dissemination of the documents it produced signaled to religious leaders that this institution was a progressive one and that change was possible—even promoted. An emphasis on interreligious dialogue and active recognition of the unique cultures that made up the global Church brought to the fore the necessity of addressing the specific spiritual and secular needs of the Catholic adherents of these various cultures. On Pine Ridge, this resulted in an affirmation of the Jesuit approach and an increased pressure on the missionaries to reinvigorate efforts to weave Lakota traditionalism into their ministry there. Numerous Jesuit priests involved with the school sought to actively engage with the Lakota people and learn first-hand from them about how Catholicism and Lakota spirituality related to one another and how Lakota students could be best served educationally. Their findings helped to direct policy and foster attitudes of acceptance to Lakota traditionalism within RCIS.

Bolstering these spiritually based motivations was a set of secular ones that influenced how the Jesuits addressed when and in what ways to integrate Lakota traditional customs into their institutions. First was the Jesuit order's belief that the mission structure was not intended to be a permanent one and should, in time, be replaced by a diocesan structure with indigenous converts fostering the faith. Jesuit leaders in America and Canada struggled over their dual obligations to serve the indigenous people of the Americas and their desire to migrate their presence to areas which they felt their work would achieve better success. Second, financial constraints within the school itself forced RCIS administration to depend heavily upon financial support from their congregation and patrons in order to continue to ensure that the school would remain open and in Jesuit control. This, in turn, motivated the Jesuits to attempt to secure both by

tailoring their educational and spiritual approach to the desires of the Lakota people and the ideals of the Civil Rights Era.

### The Jesuit Missionary Approach

The Jesuit commitment to missionary work, demonstrated from as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century into the present, is well-documented by historians, with countless scholars attending to studies of Matteo Ricci in China, José de Acosta in South America, and Paul Le Jeune in Canadian New France. Emboldened by their order's call to convert as many souls as they were able, these missionaries—among others—developed carefully crafted strategies in an effort to achieve these ends within the non-Christian societies they were located. For many missionaries, accommodation to the native customs and practices served as an effective way to ingratiate themselves with the people they sought to convert. From as early as the 1500's, the Jesuits sought to gain converts to a faith which could—and oftentimes did—run counter to the traditional ways of their target populations by adapting their mannerisms, appearance, and teachings to an individual culture's demands. Accommodation as a missionary practice was highly strategic; it allowed Jesuit missionaries the latitude to syncretize aspects of the Catholic faith with that of the indigenous people instead of forcing the latter to abide dogmatically to doctrine. For Jesuits who found themselves attempting to convert souls in power structures that did not favor them, this technique could mean the difference between being welcomed by one's hosts or forced to withdraw.

One example of this is the aforementioned missionary Matteo Ricci. During the course of his work amongst the 16<sup>th</sup> century Chinese, he attracted heavy criticism from other religious orders due to his willingness to dress like a Confucian scholar and integrate Confucian language and ideas into his teachings about Catholicism. However, after a condemnation from the Pope of

Ricci's accommodations, the Emperor of China withdrew his official Jesuit protection, signaling that he was not interested in engaging with a missionary order that was not willing to accommodate itself to Chinese culture.<sup>2</sup> Centuries later, the Jesuit mission to China still had not succeeded in establishing the Church among the Chinese, with Hans Kung observing in his book *The Council and Reunion* that it was the abandonment of "prudent accommodation to local customs" that marked the ultimate failure of this enterprise, despite the "enormous sacrifices and marvelous achievement of missionaries."<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, while there existed variation among Jesuit missions over how accommodation should be put into practice in different contexts, its presence in missionary work in some form was a foundational principle of Jesuit proselytization efforts.

This adaptation signaled not only that Jesuit missionaries were amenable to integrating the demands of their host culture into their missionary strategy, but also that they recognized the distinctiveness of the different indigenous groups whom they sought to proselytize. Instead of simply labeling all those they established missions among as indigenous or native and treating each group similarly, they acknowledged the individualized characteristics of these groups and sought to work within these cultural parameters. In a way, this emphasis on recognizing the distinctiveness of cultures and seeking to open a dialogue with their members in the hope of better appealing to them was a very early appreciation of a concept that the Second Vatican Council would codify for the entire Church centuries later. Specific to Pine Ridge, it would be crucial to the successful maintenance of the Jesuit presence therein, as it primed the Holy Rosary missionaries to tailor their practices to Lakota people specifically and recognize, in a very

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<sup>2</sup> Andres I. Prieto, "The Perils of Accommodation: Jesuit Missionary Strategies in the Early Modern World," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 4, no. 3 (2017): 402

<sup>3</sup> Gordon George, Untitled Correspondence, 1963, Series 1-1, Reel 3, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries, 8.

rudimentary way, the historic nationhood that separated them from other North American indigenous groups.

The Jesuits of Holy Rosary Mission demonstrated the accommodationist strategy in action among the Lakota people they served from even before the mission's foundation. Akin to their predecessors on other continents, they sought to actively engage with the local indigenous culture, instead of demanding full-scale acculturation of indigenous people. Much of this had to do with the fact that the Jesuits were only one of multiple Christian denominations within the area vying for congregants, amidst considerable anti-Catholic sentiment in America at large. By juxtaposing themselves with the more dogmatically rigid Protestant religions in the area, the Jesuits were able to appeal fairly effectively to the Lakota.<sup>4</sup> Pierre Jean De Smet, who was pivotal in establishing friendly relations between the Jesuits and the Lakota prior to the foundation of the missions at Pine Ridge, was termed the "White Indian" by his Jesuit peers for his great efforts to integrate Lakota traditionalism with Catholicism.<sup>5</sup> It was, in part, this compromising aspect of the Jesuit missionary approach that prompted indigenous leaders such as Red Cloud, chief of the Oglala Lakota band of Pine Ridge, to view a Catholic mission run by the Jesuits as something that held a number of advantages for their people, politically and religiously.

While a primary aim of the mission was to Christianize the Lakota people on the Pine Ridge reservation, it is unlikely that the missionaries wished to acclimate them fully into American culture outside of their obligational duty to the U.S. government. The Catholic faith frowned upon vices that were generally accepted within mainstream American culture, including

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<sup>4</sup> Robert W. Galler Jr., "A Triad of Alliances: The Roots of Holy Rosary Indian School." *South Dakota Historical Society Press* 28, no. 3 (1998): 150.

<sup>5</sup> Enochs, *The Jesuit Mission to the Lakota Sioux*, 124; Galler, "A Triad of Alliances," 151.

divorce and alcoholic drinking, and, viewing themselves as the reservation's spiritual caretakers, the Jesuits desired to foster the development of a people who would also shun these things.<sup>6</sup> Because of this, the Jesuits of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by and large did not aim to eradicate Lakota culture entirely and replace it with American culture; instead, they consistently engaged in a cost-benefit analysis to decide which aspects were to be accepted, which were to be utilized for missionary work, and which were to be defended against as harmful to the spread of Catholicism. This approach was especially note-worthy because it was surrounded by an aggressive national strategy at the time to combat the so-termed "Indian Problem," characterized by sentiments such as "kill the Indian to save the man" and practices of outright genocide and forcible migration from indigenous ancestral homelands.<sup>7</sup>

As such, the Jesuits of Holy Rosary did not shy away from making concessions they felt were either harmless or outright beneficial to their missionary objectives. In seeking to encourage Lakota elders to convert to Catholicism before death, priests like Placidius Sialm agreed to a number of Native demands, such as allowing for a Lakota burial instead of a Catholic one.<sup>8</sup> In addition, while Lakota-serving Jesuits preserved the general structure of the Catholic mass, they changed the venue to suit their congregants needs—for example, situating the altar in a teepee—or integrated Lakota language into the service, preceding the Second Vatican Council's call for liturgy in the vernacular by decades. Sister M. Mildred of the neighboring Our Lady of Lourdes Mission recounts this latter accommodation in her correspondence, writing that the sisters were expected to sing Christian hymnals in the Lakota language during religious

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<sup>6</sup> Enochs, *The Jesuit Mission to the Lakota Sioux*, 103-4.

<sup>7</sup> David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928* (Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Enochs, *The Jesuit Mission to the Lakota Sioux*, 107.

services.<sup>9</sup> Even the physical decoration of the Church benefited from Lakota influence. In 1940, Holy Rosary Mission employed a “former Mission boy of unusual talents” named Felix Walking to paint the interior of the school church, with publications that announced the church’s opening lauding his ability to expertly blend Lakota art techniques and design with Catholic gothic architecture.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, Jesuit priests who were well-respected by the people they served were sometimes adopted into the Lakota nation or a particular Lakota family and given a traditional name as a commemorative mark. One such priest, Fr. Zimmerman, was given the name High Eagle for his service among the Lakota and upon his death in 1954 was buried alongside Chief Red Cloud himself.<sup>11</sup> His approach to proselytizing among the Lakota gives a valuable insight into the Pine Ridge missionary ideal and represents the guiding practice of the Jesuits therein:

...the missionary must know the customs of the people with whom he works. He must be acquainted with their background, their environment, and heritage. The Church has always emphasized that the missionary should adapt himself to the ways of thinking of his converts, should take what is good and noble in their way of life and preserve it and not destroy it.<sup>12</sup>

Highlighted, too, within Zimmerman’s words is the Jesuit conception that they, like the U.S. government, possessed the moral and cultural authority to decide which aspects of Lakota culture were fit to be preserved and which could be stripped away. Thus, while the Jesuit missionary approach indeed promoted cooperation with the local culture and customs, it is an important caveat to note that it did not completely protect indigenous populations from an assault, however

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<sup>9</sup> Sr. M. Mildred Untitled Correspondence, 30 Sept. 1931, Series 1-1, Reel 1, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

<sup>10</sup> “The Church at Holy Rosary Mission,” 24 June 1940, Series 1-1, Reel 2, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

<sup>11</sup> John M. Scott, “High Eagle Has Gone,” 1954, Series 1-1, Reel 3, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

<sup>12</sup> Enochs, *The Jesuit Mission to the Lakota Sioux*, 148.

subtle, on their way of life. The Jesuit administrators of RCIS were perhaps more willing to accept aspects of the Lakota way of life into the classroom and church than were other Catholic orders, but to many alumni, this qualified acceptance was no less damaging than an outright rejection.<sup>13</sup>

### The Effects of the Second Vatican Council

A number of religious orders within the Catholic Church viewed the Jesuits' willingness to compromise certain aspects of the Catholic faith for the purpose of a more successfully missionary appeal to be contrary to the teachings of the Catholic faith. However, the Jesuits themselves were well-versed in Catholic canon and doctrine and viewed their assimilative approach as falling perfectly in line with what the Catholic Church espoused. Despite this, it would not be until the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's that their methods and approach to non-Christian cultures were publicly embraced by the highest authorities within the Church. The Second Vatican Council was opened by Pope John XXIII in 1962 to clarify the Catholic Church's relation to the modern world and make necessary changes to the Church itself as befit its status as a modern entity. The changes Vatican II ushered in altered the structure of the Mass and the official Catholic attitude in significant ways and, because of this, remains divisive among adherents into the present. For Holy Rosary Mission and RCIS, three Council documents in particular are of significant importance to understanding how Vatican II affected indigenous education at Pine Ridge: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Ad Gentes*, and *Gravissimum Educationis*. Due to the fact that much of the Jesuit order, guided by Ignatian values, already upheld and actively practiced what the Council preached, the Jesuits working at RCIS were well prepared to accept the changes called for and utilize these to guide decisions concerning the future direction

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<sup>13</sup> Tim A. Giago Jr., *The Aboriginal Sin* (San Francisco, CA: The Indian Historical Press, 1978).

of the school. Outside of the Jesuit order, the Catholic Church within the United States responded to the challenge put forth by the Council by improving their efforts to respond to the unique needs of minority groups subscribing to the Catholic faith, including Native Americans.

*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, or the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, was promulgated at the outset of the Council in 1963 and addresses the Council's reforms to the Catholic Mass. For the Catholic Church at large, these reforms—including saying of the Mass in the vernacular and addressing the congregants *versus populum*—signaled that change was possible within the Catholic Church and that it was an organization that was willing to adapt with the passing of time. For Holy Rosary Mission, the constitution's section on adapting the Mass to different cultures and traditions was of special import. As shown above, the Jesuits of the mission had a long history of tweaking liturgical practices to meet Lakota needs, so the Constitution largely validated their approach. It upheld the Church's position that an imposition of "rigid uniformity" in matters that do not affect central tenets of the faith is unnecessary.<sup>14</sup> Instead, the Church is called to respond to the unique needs of the people it serves: "Anything in these peoples' way of life which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error she studies with sympathy and, if possible, preserves intact. Sometimes in fact she admits such things into the liturgy itself, so long as they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit."<sup>15</sup>

Promulgated two years later, *Ad Gentes* concerns the missionary efforts of the Church and thus directly affected the Jesuits of Holy Rosary. This constitution falls very much in line with the Council's emphasis on interreligious dialogue and appreciation of the varying cultures of the world; it promotes a missionary approach wherein the missionary considers himself to be a

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<sup>14</sup> Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Section 37.

<sup>15</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

member of the group he is aiming to proselytize and shares in their culture and customs.<sup>16</sup> It further urges missionaries to make themselves aware of the history and social structure of indigenous group and seek to learn their native language in order to better communicate with potential converts.<sup>17</sup> In regards to missionary education efforts, *Ad Gentes* acknowledges that an aim of this work is indeed the formation of Catholic youth, but emphasizes that missionaries should also work towards promoting the dignity of their students and, through education, help them achieve better living conditions.<sup>18</sup> Expanding upon this and applying it to Catholic education more generally, *Gravissimum Educationis*, promulgated in the same year, upholds the right to education and a parent's prerogatives in the process. It affirms the right of every person to an education that is suited to their individual attributes, including "the culture and tradition of their country."<sup>19</sup> Further, it highlights the role of parents in educating their children and choosing what type of formal education the latter takes part in.<sup>20</sup> These guidelines on education were incorporated by the missionaries of Holy Rosary Mission and integrated into the way they taught their students and what resources they offered to them and the larger community.

In his Apostolic Exhortation at the close of the Council in 1965, Pope Paul VI expressed is optimism over the positive effects of the Council's constitutions and reform and advises the Church to work diligently to incorporate them in the coming years: "The success of the Council, and the obtaining of the very best results for the life of the Church, depends much less upon the multiplicity of its laws, and the zeal and industry which went into their making, then on their

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<sup>16</sup> Vatican Council II, *Ad Gentes: Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church*, Chapter II, Article 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ad Gentes*, Chapter IV.

<sup>18</sup> *Ad Gentes*, Chapter II, Article 1.

<sup>19</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gravissimum Educationis: Declaration on Christian Education*, Section 1

<sup>20</sup> *Gravissimum Educationis*, Section 6.

translation into practice in the years which lie ahead.”<sup>21</sup> Vatican II had the effect of normalizing and codifying many of the pre-existent Jesuit values and framing them as a way in which the Church could successfully adapt to the modern world. Even before the Council’s close, the Jesuits were already recognizing the importance of adapting their methods of education more drastically to the needs of the Lakota, all in accord with Vatican reforms. In 1963, Fr. Glendon R. Welshons, a missionary serving as an administrator of RCIS at the time, wrote about the importance of cultural awareness in education in his proposal for the potential merger of RCIS with another local mission school: “We must always keep in mind the particular uniqueness, qualities, needs and otherwise multifaceted background of these Indian people we are privileged to serve... The schools for our Indian children should be fitted to *their* special needs and situation.”<sup>22</sup> Guided by the Church’s welcoming attitude toward this approach and anthropological advancements, Welshons advocated for history and social studies courses that would teach students about Native Americans in general and their own nation in particular. Similarly, the Superior of Holy Rosary Mission at the time of the Council, Fr. Robert W. Lambeck, echoed the calls of the Council both to recognize native culture and to craft an education that would help students achieve better living conditions. In an appeals letter written in 1964, Fr. Lambeck characterized RCIS’s Lakota students as psychologically isolated between their traditional culture and that of mainstream America, occupying a third “reservation culture.”<sup>23</sup> This recognition that cultural assimilation attempts had left the Lakota with a culture

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<sup>21</sup> Pope Paul VI, “Apostolic Exhortation,” 4 November 1965, Series 1-1, Reel 4, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

<sup>22</sup> Glendon R. Welshons, “The Proposed Merger of the Indian Mission Schools,” 1963, Series 1-1, Reel 3, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

<sup>23</sup> Robert W. Lambeck, Untitled Appeals Letter, 1964, Series 5, Reel 1, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

markedly different from either Lakota or American culture would inform the Jesuit understanding of how best to serve their students in the coming years.

A proponent of this line of thinking was Fr. John Bryde. Fr. Bryde served RCIS for twenty-one years, teaching there and eventually becoming principal of the high school, before pursuing his P.h.D. of psychology at the University of Denver. For his dissertation, Bryde conducted a study of Native students' achievement levels compared to that of their white counterparts and found that from third until seventh grade Native students performed on par or higher than white students at the same level. In seventh grade, however, this trend reversed, and for the rest of their primary education, Native students struggled with below-average academic performance and high drop-out rates.<sup>24</sup> In an attempt to explore the cause of this phenomena, Bryde surveyed a number of students on their psychological states and found that Native students reported a much higher rate of social alienation, depression, rejection, and low self-esteem than their non-Native peers.<sup>25</sup> To address this, he developed a course of study to respond to the needs of Native students and elevate their psychological and academic abilities called "How To Be A Modern Indian," which was implemented experimentally at RCIS in the wake of Vatican II. The aim of this course was to teach Native students a history of their specific nation, foster pride in their heritage and race, and identify and incorporate Native cultural values into their lives.<sup>26</sup> Speaking about the course, Bryde attested that the Native student "will be shown clearly that acculturational psychology is not a matter of ceasing to be Indian... [or] of completely becoming white."<sup>27</sup> Instead, he continued, "he [the Native student] will be shown how to take the best from

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<sup>24</sup> John F. Bryde, *The Sioux Indian Student: A Study of Scholastic Failure and Personality Conflict*, (Dakota Press: 1966).

<sup>25</sup> "BIA Schools to Use New Study Course: 'How To Be A Modern Indian,'" *Navajo Times* (Window Rock, AZ), Dec. 7, 1967.

<sup>26</sup> "BIA Schools to Use New Study Course."

<sup>27</sup> "BIA Schools to Use New Study Course."

the two cultures, blend and integrate these values within himself, with the result that he creates within himself a unique modern Indian personality.”<sup>28</sup>

Bryde’s contributions to RCIS’s pedagogical strategy and an acknowledgement of Vatican II ideals can be seen vividly in the revisions made to the faculty handbook between 1967 and 1975. In the 1967 edition, the objectives of the school are concerned primarily with the Catholic formation of its students and, while the document cautiously acknowledges that a continued separation of the modes of life of the Church and the Lakota people is not possible, it expresses a desire to provide a specifically Catholic solution to the problems of the Lakota.<sup>29</sup> By 1969, the wording of this section had been significantly altered to acknowledge the school’s obligation to recognize the characteristics of the Lakota reservation life. It stated as a primary aim its desire to help students develop pride in themselves as Lakota people first and Catholics second, marking a shift from earlier emphases on Catholicism serving as students’ primary identification.<sup>30</sup> Further, this edition includes a foreword directed to teachers warning of the danger that their value system would clash with that of their students. To ward against this, the foreword advises teachers to learn about their students’ cultures and make an effort to participate in the larger Lakota community.<sup>31</sup> By 1975, the high school handbook lists Lakota History and Culture and Native American studies as required core curriculum requirements and Lakota Language as an elective.<sup>32</sup> A “Philosophy of Red Cloud Indian School, Holy Rosary Mission”

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<sup>28</sup> “BIA Schools to Use New Study Course.”

<sup>29</sup> “Faculty Handbook,” 1967, Series 5, Reel 2, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

<sup>30</sup> “Faculty Handbook,” 1969, Series 5, Reel 2, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.; see Appendix for side-by-side comparison.

<sup>31</sup> “Faculty Handbook.”

<sup>32</sup> “Faculty Handbook,” 1975, Series 5, Reel 2, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

section penned by the mission's Superior, Fr. Theodore Zuern, promotes the view that teachers are expected to respond to the cultural needs of their students and that the school encourages students to identify with their Lakota heritage so they can develop into "whole and balanced adults."<sup>33</sup>

In the community at large, Vatican II impacted the way in which the Jesuits conceived of how best to serve the Lakota people. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* prompted Holy Rosary Mission to embrace the vernacular in liturgy services in a way that respected the native people's identity as both American and Lakota. "A Lakota and English Hymnal For Use In Sioux Communities," published in 1972 by Holy Rosary Mission, included all the hymns and responses of an ordinary mass in both English and Lakota, making it easy for congregants to understand the mass structure regardless of what language they were most fluent in.<sup>34</sup> Vatican II signaled to missionaries that they need not show negativity to other cultures in order to promote Catholicism, with Fr. William Stolzman attesting that "a number of Christian pastors, especially since Vatican II, have increasingly shown respect for and have even participated in Lakota ritual."<sup>35</sup> Pine Ridge Jesuits like Fr. Stolzman and Fr. Michael Steltenkamp were thus emboldened by the Council to take a more active role in dialoguing with the Lakota. Both missionaries conducted experiential and interview-based research on the indigenous culture of Pine Ridge throughout the 1960's and 1970's and published books that sought to educate others on Lakota rituals and spirituality and compare these things to Catholicism.<sup>36</sup> In 1973, Fr.

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<sup>33</sup> "Faculty Handbook."

<sup>34</sup> Holy Rosary Mission, "A Lakota and English Hymnal For Use In Sioux Communities", 1972, Series 5, Reel 1, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

<sup>35</sup> William Stolzman, *The Pipe and Christ: A Christian-Sioux Dialogue* (Chamberlain, SD: St. Joseph's Indian School Press, 2007), 13.

<sup>36</sup> Michael F. Steltenkamp, *The Sacred Vision: Native American Religion and Its Practice Today* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982); Stolzman, *The Pipe and Christ*.

Stolzman founded the Rosebud Medicine Men and Pastors' Meeting in order to engage Lakota elders and Catholic priests from the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations in a discussion on the similarities and differences of Lakota spirituality and Catholicism. While the meetings remained secret initially, due to the local Catholic Church's apprehension over signaling full-scale acceptance of Lakota spirituality, by their close six years later the publicized "mutual discussions" of the group were popularly interpreted as "mutual approval."<sup>37</sup> Stolzman and Steltenkamp, both faculty members at RCIS, represented the post-Vatican II Jesuit presence in the school and community, one characterized by active engagement with the local culture, participation in many of its traditions, and a desire to learn from it at the same time Jesuits taught and served the Lakota.

The Catholic Church in the United States was similarly impacted by Vatican II in how it sought to interact with its Native congregants nationwide. Attention and initiatives tailored to its minority adherents after the Council highlights the Church's recognition that special efforts had to be expended to address unique indigenous needs in order to retain a thriving Catholic presence in Indian Country. Exemplary of this shift is a statement written by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on Native Americans in 1977, which acknowledges the tumultuous relationship between the Church and Native American communities in the past and puts forth a set of guidelines for how the Church should conduct itself in the future.<sup>38</sup> It frames its objectives as a realization of the calls of Vatican II and affirms that much of what the Jesuits were already practicing at Pine Ridge was the ideal way to serve Native communities in the post-

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<sup>37</sup> Stolzman, *The Pipe and Christ*, 15.

<sup>38</sup> United States Catholic Conference, "Statement of US Catholic Bishops on American Indians," 4 May 1977.

Vatican II era. In the conclusion of the statement, the Conference states its intentions for its spiritual and educational work among Native Americans succinctly:

We must examine the Church's liturgical expressions and social and educational services within Indian communities to ask if they indeed reflect an appreciation of Indian heritage and cultural values... We urge Catholic educational institutions to examine their textbooks and curriculums and to promote programs and activities that will enable students at all levels to appreciate American Indian history, cultures and spirituality.<sup>39</sup>

The fact that such a declaration was not published until the late 1970's is not an adequate reason to assume that the Church in the United States had not been working progressively to implement Vatican II calls into its work among minority groups though. It was much easier for such a change to be implemented initially from a grassroots basis, working its way through Catholic reservation communities like Holy Rosary before a careful and knowledgeable plan for the entire American church could be formed. Indeed, the statement makes note of the efforts of national Church organizations such as the Commission for Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and Indians and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission since the close of Vatican II to enact its reforms and encourages them to redouble their efforts in the coming years.<sup>40</sup>

#### Secular Motivations for Change

As has been demonstrated, Vatican II and the climate it produced within the global Catholic Church was significant encouragement for the Jesuits of Pine Ridge to engage the Lakota community more actively and work to promote their wellbeing as Lakota people instead of as potential Catholic converts or as would-be American citizens. However, one would not be able to paint a complete picture of why the transition at RCIS and within Holy Rosary Mission occurred if they did not also take into account the secular concerns which served as motivation to

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<sup>39</sup> "Statement of US Catholic Bishops on American Indians," 9.

<sup>40</sup> "Statement of US Catholic Bishops on American Indians," 7.

engage with the Lakota community in a more culturally sensitive way. Primary among these motivations were the idea that the mission structure could not be continued indefinitely and the concern that, due to financial constraints and increased Native activism, the school might be wrested from Jesuit control if appropriate action was not taken.

The idea that the mission structure was only temporary can be gleaned from much of the correspondence between the Jesuits of Pine Ridge and the Dioceses of Rapid City. Jesuit missions and the activity of missionaries therein were not intended to be permanent fixtures of a community. Ideally, the Jesuits envisioned that missionaries would work within a community until a foundational base of converts could be formed and encouraged to take religious leadership roles within the area. From there, the missionary structure would give way to a diocesan one and the missionaries in the area would gradually be relocated to different assignments in areas with greater need.<sup>41</sup> Throughout the 1960's and 1970's the Jesuits of Holy Rosary Mission struggled with what direction their missionary work should take, given their dual beliefs in the temporary nature of the mission and the lack of self-sufficiency of the Pine Ridge Catholic community. Writing in the early 1960's, Fr. Lawrence Edwards, Superior of the mission, admitted that Holy Rosary was "no longer a mission in the ecclesiastical sense of the word" but that the continued presence of the Jesuit missionaries was nonetheless necessary due to the fact that the Lakota people had not "matured" enough in their faith to be able to sustain "a modern, normal parish."<sup>42</sup> Fr. Theodore Zuern echoed this sentiment a year later, claiming that factually, the efforts of Jesuits at Pine Ridge could not, at that time, be considered missionary. Despite this, he asserted

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<sup>41</sup> Theodore Zuern, "Comment on the Aim of the Mission," 1963, Series 1-1, Reel 3, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

<sup>42</sup> Lawrence Edwards To John J. Foley, 1962, Series 1-3, Reel 3, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

that due to the denigration of the traditional Lakota culture at the hands of past missionaries, the Lakota had come to identify the Catholic Church and Christianity as a “white man’s” institution and to resist its solid foundation on the reservation.<sup>43</sup>

These missionaries felt called to sustain their spiritual efforts among the Lakota as long as was necessary for them to reach a level of self-sufficiency deemed suitable for them to thrive spiritually and practically in modern day society. As missionaries in a general sense, though, they struggled with whether their efforts were best spent remaining among a people they felt unsure would ever be able to reach the standard they set for them. For Fr. Gordon George of the Northern Ontario mission to the First Nations people, it was difficult to rationalize maintaining a missionary presence on reservations when there were other areas in the global Church where Jesuit presence was perhaps more sorely needed, including Asia, Africa, and Latin America. “Is it apostolically efficient?” is the question he poses to his counterparts at Pine Ridge in his correspondence.<sup>44</sup> Concerning schools on the reservation, it appeared to many that their pre-Vatican II efforts to educate indigenous youth into self-sufficiency was a failed effort and that educational efforts, too, could better be spent elsewhere. A Jesuit faculty member at RCIS put forth a series of long-range objectives of the Lakota mission schools that highlighted this sentiment. He called for the transfer of control of all missionary pastoral work and mission grade schools to diocesan parishes and advised that the mission high schools be given over to diocesan

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<sup>43</sup> Theodore Zuern, “Comment on the Aim of the Mission,” 1963, Series 1-1, Reel 3, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

<sup>44</sup> Gordon George, Untitled Correspondence, 1963, Series 1-1, Reel 3, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

parishes or relinquished to private control.<sup>45</sup> The question of the future of the mission and its institutions thus loomed large in the minds of many at Holy Rosary Mission and RCIS.

This concern was further complicated by the financial struggles faced by the school in the latter half of the twentieth century. RCIS had long struggled to maintain itself financially through mail-in donations, small tuition and board payments, and government contract payments.

However, the latter contribution by the United States government had progressively gotten less and less substantial throughout the course of the twentieth century, until it constitutes only a small fraction of the school's financial resources. In the early 1960's, the mission's Superior Fr. Edwards projected that contributions from the government through contracts would cease to exist in the coming years, making it increasingly more necessary to secure charitable donations. He goes so far as to credit these donations as the school's "sole hope for the future."<sup>46</sup> It was necessary, therefore, that efforts to engage potential patrons be successful and, in a national and religious atmosphere that put great weight on minority rights and cultural awareness, success meant emphasizing the changes the school was making to address these concerns. This emphasis can be seen in appeals letters to donors, as well as newspaper ads taken out to solicit volunteers. A 1969 letter by Fr. Zuern, who acted as Superior after Fr. Edwards, called RCIS "the most different school in all America" due to the fact that the Jesuits, under Fr. Bryde's guidance, sought not only to give an education to Lakota youth, but to give them "the right kind" that met their unique needs and made them proud of their heritage.<sup>47</sup> In a newspaper ad, Zuern urged

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<sup>45</sup> Fr. Roach to Fathers Provincial, Kochanski and the Province Consultors, "RE: Indian Mission Schools," 31 July 1963, Series 1-1, Reel 3, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

<sup>46</sup> Lawrence Edwards to John J. Foley, 1960-1962, Series 1-1, Reel 3, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

<sup>47</sup> Theodore Zuern, Untitled Appeals Letter, April 1969, Series 5, Reel 1, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

volunteer applicants that they ought to possess a “willingness to adapt to cultural differences and needs of the Indian students” if they wished to apply.<sup>48</sup> In both cases, there was a clear emphasis on making potential volunteers and donors aware that RCIS was a frontrunner in incorporating the pedagogical and cultural trends of the time.

Because of the waning support of the government contracts, RCIS’s financial situation became so dire in the 1960’s that Jesuit leadership was forced to consider ways in which the school could adapt to address these concerns, including considering a merger between it and the neighboring St. Francis Mission School. Ultimately, it was decided upon that RCIS would gradually transition from a boarding school to a day school.<sup>49</sup> That decision, coupled with the Jesuit apprehension that, if the mission efforts were vacated, the Lakota would revert to their traditional spirituality completely, led to concerns by school administrators over whether they would be able to maintain control of the school, even if they wanted to. As will be discussed further in Chapter 3, Native activism had been bolstered by the Civil Rights Movement, and the idea of self-determination when it came to education was gaining traction among Native communities throughout the country. The Jesuits of Pine Ridge were well aware of the risks posed by this trend. As a group, they had contributed—both explicitly and inadvertently—in the disintegration of Lakota culture and knew very well that many on the reservation viewed the Church warily—sometimes, even hostilely—as emblematic of the generational trauma they were enduring. By 1974, the mission had still not recruited a single member of the Pine Ridge Lakota community to the priesthood, an “embarrassing problem” for an institution with the ultimate aim

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<sup>48</sup> Theodore Zuern, “VOLUNTEERS,” *National Catholic Reporter* (Kansas City, MO), Feb. 5, 1971.

<sup>49</sup> Robert W. Lambeck To Richard T. Jones, 28 January 1964, Series 1-1, Reel 4, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

of conversion.<sup>50</sup> This failure was primarily attributed to the “upsurgence of Indian religion” among young adults in the community and the embrace of traditional spirituality at the expense of Catholicism by older adults.<sup>51</sup>

Because of these factors, Jesuit leadership within the school and Holy Rosary Mission found itself situated within a power dynamic that did not favor the acculturation techniques it had relied upon since the founding of the Mission. They found the outside demands from the Native community and Civil Rights campaigns to be sufficient motivation to align their decision-making with Lakota demands. The transition to a day school structure opened the door for parents to take a more active role in the education of their children and prompted the school to officially rename itself Red Cloud Indian School in 1969 and establish an all-Lakota school board in 1971. Furthermore, the inclusion of Lakota history, language, and cultural studies courses necessitated the hiring of Lakota people as instructors, shifting the balance even further in favor of an equal Jesuit-Lakota partnership. Ultimately, these concerns, not influenced by the Second Vatican culture or Church currents, made RCIS’s transition not just a desired theoretical goal but also a strategic logistical aim and prompted the Jesuits to accelerate a process that might have otherwise taken longer to make a significant impact.

### Conclusion

For the Jesuits of Holy Rosary Mission, the latter half of the twentieth century produced ideal conditions for the encouragement and acceleration of RCIS’s transition from an institution that cautiously and carefully accepted aspects of indigenous traditionalism to one that prided itself in the great efforts it undertook to serve its indigenous students as Lakota individuals. The

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<sup>50</sup> Untitled Memo, 1974, Series 4, Reel 3, Holy Rosary Mission—Red Cloud Indian School Records, Raynor Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections, Marquette University Libraries.

<sup>51</sup> Untitled Memo.

culture within the Catholic Church fostered by the Second Vatican Council worked to embolden both the Jesuits to accept the challenge of responding to indigenous needs and the Lakota people to advocate for their educational rights. Recognizing that all missionary activity was oriented towards eventual termination and that certain factors were making it increasingly likely that the missionaries themselves might not be able to control the rate or nature of this termination altered the dynamic between the Jesuits and the Pine Ridge Lakota. No longer were the Jesuits in a position to make uncompromising demands of the native community nor act from a position of ultimate superiority. Thus, the 1960's brought with it an increased awareness that perhaps the Jesuit calling at Holy Rosary Mission was not strictly conversion, but also the protection and elevation of the human rights of the people they served. As the group officially tasked with the administration of RCIS, their role as agents of change was not so much outright activism as it was being receptive to the activism of other groups and instituting these groups' demands as feasibly and efficiently as possible within the school.