

A Pioneer from Biella in USA (Father Joseph Costa)

by

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(translated by J. Anthony Dewhirst)

Joseph Costa was from Pettinengo in the Province of Biella. He was born on 18 October 1823 to Giuseppe, a tailor, and Anna Maria Faccio, a housewife. They had eight children: Gasparo, Giovan Battista, Pietro, Giuseppe, Cattarina, Maria, Marianna, Cristina. He was baptised on the same day as he was born and he was confirmed on 29 January 1828, (when he was 4 years and three months old). For two years he followed his father in his domestic profession then for some time he practised joinery. Meanwhile he learned to play the organ and helped out as organist in the parochial church. But he felt deeply that his true vocation was the priesthood. With this in view, at the age of 21, he studied grammar and humanities, that is, classical letters, and did a two year's crash course. This provided him with a sufficient basic preparation.

As a result he was able to apply to join the Rosminians. He was sent to them by the Oratorian, Father Gioacchino Sella, in order to ask for admission to the Noviciate at Stresa. After a fifteen day retreat he entered the Noviciate on 6 September 1846. His Novice Masters were Fr Francesco Puecher (for a few months) and Father Giuseppe Fradelizio. In the Noviciate of the Rosminian Fathers, the office of Portinaio – that is the person who is head of the line, and therefore opens the doors – is an office of responsibility. For a long time Joseph Costa was *portinaio*, and a portinaio of some excellent novices, such as Gazzola (later English Provincial), Mazzotti, (later Rector and professor at Domo and Stresa), Garelli (future Procurator General), Castellano (Master of Novices at Rugby and Rector at Market Weighton), Bertetti (later Provost General), Mongini (a notable administrator and Procurator General) and Cardozo Ayres (the young Bishop of Pernambuco).

On 28 October 1848 he took his first vows, the scholastic vows, and on 3 November moved to the Scholasticate at Monte Calvario, Domodossola. There he studied philosophy under the guidance of Don Michele Parma, and, at the same time, took a course for a Teaching Diploma (which he obtained at Varallo with the grade of 'optime').

In October 1850 he returned to Stresa for theological studies. He could not complete these in Italy because on 25 September 1851 he was sent to England, first to Ratcliffe and then to Rugby, in order to study under the guidance of Fathers Ciacca and Gastaldi. Father Ciaccia (who had been parish priest at Milan and was still a novice) was the leader of this bold move: with Costa were the students Pietro Castellano and Michele Garelli and the lay brother Carlo Minoli.

In the accompanying letter Father Founder wrote to the Provincial, Fr G. B. Pagani: 'My dear friend, here are the five brethren you asked for. I hope, in the Lord, that they will do much good in England. I consider the three scholastics to be saints and my sole recommendation is that you take care of their well – being. It seems to me that after Costa was told where he was going he has not been very well. Perhaps this is due to too much fervour and inner turmoil. So try to bring him out of it. The other thing I recommend is that you see to it that they complete their regular studies in so far as this is possible (*EC XII*, p. 372). Costa did not disappoint Rosmini's expectations of him and on 19 February 1853 (aged 29 years and four months) he was ordained priest at Oscott College by the Bishop of Birmingham, Bernard Ullathorne, and was immediately put on pastoral work.

His first work was at Greenwich, a work of special charity (*EC XII*, p. 415) taken on by our Sisters at the suggestion of Father Lockhart and his sister who donated for this £2600. In August 1854 he was required for the new mission at Cardiff, with Father Fortunato Signini.

He was entrusted with the Church of St David, having about 7000 Catholics. On 28 February 1855 he was, however, recalled to Rugby, and four months later he was given the Mission of Barrow, and at the same time the Chaplaincy of our Sisters of Loughborough. On 4 September 1857 he was given the job of teaching music at Ratcliffe College. But in the summer of 1858 he was again at Rugby where, on 5 August, he took the vows of Spiritual Coadjutor. He returned again to Barrow and Loughborough. He remained there only a year, because from 21 June 1859 to September 1862 he worked again at Cardiff with Father Bruno and Father Gastaldi, as missionary and teacher.

At this point he made his first journey to Italy to visit his parents (after an 11 years' stint in England and Wales and 9 years of priesthood). His return journey from Civitavecchia to Marseilles, was disastrous. The second day on board he was stricken with a testicular infection. There was no more bed space so he had to spend the day and the following night sitting in indescribable pain, or lying down, as best he could, in a corner. At Marseilles he was the guest of the Capuchin Fathers, who took pity on him and looked after him for a week until he recovered and was able to continue his journey by land (AICS, letter of 20. 3. 1862).

Having arrived back in Cardiff he resumed his energetic and versatile activity. Well prepared, with a strong constitution, and ready at the call of obedience, he contributed in resolving many difficult situations, acquitting himself excellently. In October 1860 he went 'to preach round Ireland, and also to gather funds for a new church' of St Peter, which we built in Cardiff (letter of Gastaldi, 18. 10. 1860). If on the one hand he had exhausted himself physically he must, on the other, have become 'proud' of his achievement, and too full of himself. As a result, from 1861 to 1862 the Superior, Father Gastaldi, could only impress on his Superiors the 'awkward' character of Father Costa and that it was almost impossible to live harmoniously with him. Here, for example, is the portrait which Father Gastaldi painted of him, writing to Giacomo Molinari at the Sacra di San Michele: 'P.C. has great zeal and desires sincerely to foster the good of the Church. He respects the Sovereign Pontiff deeply, the authority of the bishop and is a declared enemy – as is right – of revolution. He labours for everyone, day and night in the pulpit and confessional, in the streets and private homes, without rest. If called at night to visit the sick, he gets up in the twinkling of an eye, and runs like a greyhound to the sick person's abode. He is always ready to preach on any subject whatever, to preach long or short sermons as required. He likes to be exact and orderly and observes religious discipline well enough. He is kind in manner with anyone who comes into contact with him and he earns the affection of many people by his kindness. He has only one defect, that of being too much attached to his own opinions: and this defect... is the cause of others (letter from Cardiff, 27. 1. 1862).

This a fine portrait even though it does not tell us how, in this period, Costa came down with smallpox, which confined him to bed for several weeks.

Probably we have before us two strong personalities, two different views of how to carry out the work, but the norms written in Rosmini's Rule would have greatly helped to solve any problem.

In September 1862 Father Costa was called to Rome by Father General who spoke to him about an old project of Father Pagani — never realised — to set up a missionary College at Rugby to prepare men either for America or for India where there were people speaking English. On that occasion Rosmini had replied to Pagani, 'The American Mission would appear easier because of the language and also there would be almost no need of philosophy. On the contrary if we prefer India, I believe that. ...this would demand very much study of their philosophies, besides the Indian language...' (*EC*, X, p. 672). Father Bertetti was then stationed in England and was given the job of getting the project under way. It is obvious that he had the previous events in mind. Now, one of his ex – fellow novices, Henry Damian Juncker, had been consecrated in 1857 Bishop of Alton, Illinois (which would be named 'See City') and had come to Rome to ask for some priests for his people. This matter should have been shared by Father Bertetti with Father Costa but for the time being things remained under

wraps. When Father Costa returned to England, he stopped in London to help out at the house in Kingsland where the ailing Father Lockhart lived together with Father Lewthwaite: 'they impressed me by their kindness and loving manner', he wrote to Father General (letter of 3. 4. 1862). But on 7. 10. 1862 Costa again wrote to Father General from London as 'the least of his sons' but 'never so unhappy and discontented as at present'. What had happened?

It is necessary to know that in London Father Lockhart's mother and two lady friends of hers had taken up quarters near our Fathers, in order to help them, by contributing to the house keeping. But little by little things got to such a stage that these two women came and went like the Superior in a religious house, as if they were in charge, and even had the right to open the Superior's personal mail. Hence Father Costa's indignation and impatience. He was vexed with Father Lockhart (whom he also esteemed) and also with the other Priest.

At the end of October he was summoned again to Cardiff, where people waited for him and, in a certain sense, claimed him back. But in 1863 Father Provincial assigned him to the Scholasticate at Rugby in order to avoid any disagreement arising in Cardiff, even with the new Rector, Father Domenico Cavalli.

In June – July 1863 Father General Bertetti was visiting the English Province. He noted the progress of the works there, spoke with all the Fathers, and realised that things had reached such a point that it was necessary to take a courageous decision: to send Father Costa to America, as an *external coadjutor* of the Institute, to open up a new difficult mission field. But in Costa he had a man certainly prepared and capable of the task. He discussed this with Father Provincial, and confirmed the decision by letter (letter to Father Ridolfi of 18. 11. 1863).

At this point Costa experienced a crisis in his vocation and revealed this to Father General: 'I do not know whether in my present circumstances it would be right to continue in the Institute of Charity. I have asked advice from the most learned members of the Institute [Father Gazzola?]...but the doubt I have mentioned still remains' (letter from Rugby, 22. 12. 1863). Father General consoled and encouraged his tempted son, but he did not revoke his decision. Our Constitutions provide for *external coadjutors* (nn. 10, 501). Father Costa had great gifts but did not know how to live harmoniously with his brethren. This was a request from a bishop. Father Costa should make preparations and go with the blessing of God. Fr Rinolfi should write to Bishop Juncker and make preparations for the journey.

The date chosen was 18 April 1864. The journey was by sea on the *City of Washington* departing from Liverpool. The estimated date of arrival at New York was 3 May. It took about a three days' train journey from New York to Alton (on the Mississippi). Naturally the Bishop gave him a really warm welcome; and after a few days rest, which he used to sound out his man, entrusted him with the mission of St Mary's, Springfield, Illinois, 94 miles north of Alton. Here, Father Costa, swiftly settled down, made friends with young and old, winning everyone over. This fact is especially worth mentioning because the heart of Illinois, at that time, was not a friendly environment for strangers, especially Catholics. But his reputation grew when President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated (14. 4. 1865). His family had a house at Springfield a short way from the Catholic Church. Father Costa not only lived near the bereaved family, but arranged that the entire Catholic community should participate in the funeral in a show of true friendship and patriotism.

After scarcely a year and a half (November 1865) Father Costa was transferred to Jacksonville (36 miles further west) where he also won over the people with his practical intelligence, honesty and dedication. It was here that began his proverbial career as *a builder*. In fact he provided the mission with a new church, a parochial house, and a school; and he bought land so that a parish cemetery could be made. In spite of the great expenses he faced he lived austere, as befitting a religious, and managed to save some of his money, offering it to his home Province. In a letter of 18. 12. 68 he writes: 'The English Provincial has written to me lately asking him to send him some money...I do not believe that it would be prudent for me to be here without any money at all. [nevertheless] I have sent to England £450 in gold (stirling)'. And already in this letter he starts to ask Father General for a companion, 'also a good brother'. He would be kept waiting for a long time, and this would become the

‘leitmotif’ of very many subsequent letters; a fitting ‘nemesis’ for his past behaviour? The new church had a capacity of ‘more than a thousand people’, it had a campanile with three bells, and a fence all round the building. The total cost was \$ 44.000. It would be dedicated on 29 August 1869 ‘to Christ Crucified and to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Michael. The Archbishop of Cincinnati, J. B. Purcell, the See of Alton being vacant since 1868, preached three times that day and in the evening confirmed 282 people...The annual number of baptisms is between 140 – 150. I have to keep a horse and be ready day and night to respond to sick calls. I keep very good health. I need the good people’s prayers’ (letter to Fr General 29. 9. 1869).

However, the new bishop of Alton, a German, had no time for religious and convents in his Diocese. So Fr Costa was compelled to ask to work in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Ohio, where, indeed, he found himself always busy and alone. ‘I have no close friend’ (letter of 12. 10. 1872).

From March 1873 to August 1874 Father Costa was at St Mary’s, El Paso, an old parish of which we do not know a great deal, and from where he moved to Bloomington, Illinois. He stayed here a little more than three months.

On 22. 9. 1874, at Stresa, Father Giuseppe Gioacchino Cappa succeeded Father Bertetti, as Superior General. Father Costa wrote to him from Bloomington on 24. 11. 1874 to congratulate him on his election, and in order to make known his urgent need of company, (‘I have been here for more than 10 years all alone’), furthermore, to ask for some books published by Father Founder ‘whose life and teaching continually preoccupies me’. He adds that the church of the Holy Trinity, Bloomington, ‘would occupy three workers *in vinea Domini*, (in the Lord’s vineyard), but I have only one assistant who does what he can’. In this Mission – writes Mgr Burke – Father Costa encountered the more negative aspect of the Irish character’, because of this he would soon leave this post. (History of the Parish of the Blessed Trinity).

On 1 January 1875 we find Father Costa in Lincoln, Illinois where he immediately built ‘two schools for the education of the Catholic girls and boys of this Mission; and this work takes up some of my time...The Mission at Lincoln was so run down, and I would say ruined, that many believed that it would be fruitless to build the schools. But, as you would expect, the Catholic instinct is very strong. From the first day that the schools were opened not only the Catholics but the Protestants, too, sent their children to our school’ (letter of 5. 1. 1876).

In Lincoln Father Costa found ‘concord and peace’, and, although there was so much to do and ‘and not done at full speed’ (because he had two churches to look after, St Patrick’s and St Mary’s, at Elkhart), he was not discouraged, but organised a Retreat for the people, called in the Redemptorists, and every day rejoiced in conversions to the practice of the faith resulting in many confessions and communions.

But the serene sky would be riven by lightning: On the vigil of St Joseph of 1877 Fr Cappa, in whom Costa had placed so much hope, died at Stresa. His successor, elected on 10 April, was young Father Luigi Lanzoni, whom Costa did not know personally, but whom – he wrote on 24 May – ‘he accepted and revered’. Even more, he continued, ‘I can definitely say that I feel very close to you’.

There were also changes in America. On 12 February 1875 Pope Pius IX had erected, in the heart of Illinois, the new Diocese of Peoria which stretched from the Mississippi to the borders of the state of Indiana. The first bishop appointed was Mgr John Lancaster Spaulding. He was consecrated in New York Cathedral on 1 May 1877 and took possession of his church on 22 May following. Father Costa described him as a ‘benign, affable and reasonable person’. Mgr Spaulding – who must have heard of the capability of Father Costa and would immediately appreciate his true pastoral gifts – wrote on 24 May to Father Lanzoni that he wanted him left in America to work for him. He had, in fact, a plan in mind, and would soon reveal it to Father Costa, with the confidence which arises between people who feel they can get on with each other. He would entrust him with the Mission of Galesburg, Illinois, a city of about 5000

souls, 53 miles north west of Peoria The church was very neglected spiritually and would become the definitive apostolic field of Father Costa for about 40 years. Indeed, on 3 September 1877, Father Costa wrote to Father Lanzoni from Galesburg that he was sorry to leave Lincoln ‘where everything belonging to the Mission was in good order’, but realised that obedience is a sign of the will of God, in which we find our holiness. Galesburg, he added, is three times more numerous than Lincoln and here there will be work for two priests...Everything needs to be done with the exception of the church.’ He mentions that he kept \$ 6000 dollars in gold in reserve and which is ‘money at your disposal’. However he spent \$ 300 a year for two servants – a housekeeper and a man in the church.

Following on this request he gives an account of his spiritual state. Mass and Office faithfully observed every day; meditation neglected at times, but he experiences its value; Confession once a month, temptations of every sort for which ‘I ask you to advise me, to help me with your prayers, and recommend me to the prayers of our brethren in Europe’ (*Ibid*).

And Costa began a large and interesting correspondence by mail with Father Lanzoni. This will guide us from now on in describing the achievements and difficulties experienced by Father Costa at Galesburg, and later by those of us who came from Europe to help him.

The letter of 17. 10. 1877, answering a request from Father General, explains word for word how the system is organised of compensating priests in their care for souls in the dioceses of the United States. Father Costa explains that there are different systems, but large compensations for work done, if not squandered on smoking, alcohol and other things not necessary for life. In this aspect Father Costa is a totally good religious, but Father Lanzoni required an annual return of debits and credits. He would make suggestions, he would restrain him from incurring exorbitant debts, he would demand surplus money, which he would use in the many works carried out at Calvario (the novices’ oratory, the large and practical scholasticate) and in the publication of the works of Father Founder.

Father Lanzoni also wanted to know whether Rosmini and the Institute were known in America, and Father Costa replied that ‘our Institute is not known nor will it be generally known in America until we have a house and priests of the Institute that will give Missions: Missions given to the masses are the best means of making the Institute known (letter of 27. 12. 1877).

On 26. 12. 1878 Father Costa mentioned that fortunately he had finally an assistant. He was his nephew, Don Luigi Selva, the son of his sister Maria, who Propaganda Fidei had sent to the Bishop and whom the Bishop had passed on to his uncle as his assistant. He would be with him till 1887. Later he would move on to take over the parish of St Patrick until 1893, and then would be transferred elsewhere.

On 13. 2. 1879 Father Costa sent to Father General his will drawn up ‘according to the laws of Illinois’, and in which he nominated as his sole heir Father Domenico Gazzola, Provincial in England from 1875 – 1906. Subsequently, being ill and old, Father Gazzola, after misgivings and hesitations, nominated as his heir, Father George Doubleday (1900), who, as we shall see, would lend a hand in works of all kinds in America.

On 5. 6. 1879 Father Costa expressed to Father General his desire to have a relic of Father Founder, ‘something used by him, anything at all’. ‘I have seen wonderful things’ from the use of relics of people “in the odour of sanctity” even though not yet canonized (for example Madame Barat, foundress of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart)ⁱⁱ. On 14. 7. 1879 he thanks Father General for kindly sending him ‘two relics’. In payment he sends a draft for 5000 francs ‘to be drawn in Turin’. But on the subject of relics, I anticipate here the news of a great gift which Father Costa would receive from Father Lanzoni for the City of Galesburg. This would be the entire body of a little martyr, Saint Crescens, taken from the Roman catacombs. The relic would arrive in America at the beginning of September 1887, ‘seals intact’, and would be exposed for the veneration of the faithful in the Church of Corpus Christi, where, from that time, the City has been placed under his protection and still is.

But we shall now describe Father Costa’s enthusiastic building, both material and spiritual, at Galesburg. The church which had been entrusted to him by the Bishop was that of St Patrick

which needed urgent repairs and which had no Presbytery. He would have to buy the parish house which was the personal property of his predecessor (a certain Father Howard) and begin to repair the church.

Meanwhile he got a Paulist from New York, Father Dwyer, who preached a parochial mission in December 1877 and, since he was alert to the urgent necessity for a school, desired by the people for some time, he accepted the advice of Father Dwyer to contact the Sisters of Providence in nearby Indiana as possible teachers, and able to fill positions of responsibility. In January 1878 he wrote to the Superior of the said Sisters about the plan. In February he visited them and in November he renewed his request by letter.

Meanwhile, he had bought land on an excellent and imposing site. On 24 June 1878 he got the Bishop to bless the foundation stone and within a year the building was up. (The cost was \$ 16.850). He did not yet have the money for the convent, but the good Sisters of Providence of 'St Mary of the Woods', founded by Guérin (1798 – 1856, now a saint) arrived in February 1879 all the same, and nine of them managed to fit into small premises. On 30. 10. 1879 the Bishop blessed the school and said 'that it was the most beautiful parish school he had seen in America'. So the tiring job of education began with the first 300 students. The school was called St Joseph's Academy (the patron saint of Father Costa!). It was frequented by both Catholics and Protestants. The next year the Sisters' convent, next to the school, was also ready.

At this point we must mention a very grave event for Father Costa at this time. He describes this in a letter of 31. 10. 1879 and I leave the account to him 'On the evening of 2 October, between eight and nine o'clock, a disagreeable person came to the house under the pretext of settling the accounts for a plot in the cemetery; but in fact he came to kill me. Seeing that he was trying to pick a quarrel I opened the door so that he might leave peacefully. But he seized me by the neck and struck me with an iron with such force as to leave me for dead, and took to his heels. My nephew, who was in the adjacent room, came out immediately, but he was too late to lay hold on the assassin. The doctor diagnosed a serious wound, discovering a cranial fracture of some length. I began to move to say Mass, but the result was that my brain would not function and I could scarcely walk. Deo gratias! As far as my mental state was concerned, it goes without saying that I was resigned to the will of God, and that, as far as I could, I prepared myself for the next life...'

Naturally Father Lanzoni replied in alarm on 27. 11. 1879 asking for the reasons for the attack. Did he have any enemies for religious reasons? Father Costa clarified matters on 8. 1. 1880: 'I am well enough to attend to the duties of my ministry. I am not suffering any trouble except some dizziness at certain times... As regards the causes, 'I will tell you all I know. This poor man is Irish, married to a Protestant, and he hasn't been to church for two years. One of his sons, baptised in this church, picked up a malady from which he died. During his illness, not before, nothing was done to instruct the son, and when in danger of death he was left to die without the sacraments. After this death his father came to speak with me about the funeral. I could not refrain from saying that he had left his son to die like an animal. The fellow took this badly but said nothing. During the funeral I said some words in general to the family about their duty to instruct their children regarding the sacraments after they were seven years old, and I explained to them the teaching of the Church regarding this. The woman and the Protestant mother, and others who hate the Catholic religion induced this wretched man to assassinate me, and it is said that one of them had given him 30 dollars – that same day – in order to encourage him to do it. Other reasons could have been influential. The new school is a very bitter pill for the Protestants [and for the teachers out of work]. Another section of people grumbling about me are those who sell alcohol. I have set up a 'Society of Abstainers', which is doing very well'. And he concludes, saying 'that here in America we are *tamquam morti destinatos* (as if marked out for death): may the Lord help us!' We know, of course, that when zeal for the kingdom of God produces great fruit, this provokes terrible reactions from the Evil One.

But let us return to the enthusiastic activity of Father Costa. In those years a railroad was being built at Galesburg and the children who lived on the other side of the railway lines were in great danger when they had to cross the lines in order to come to the school of St Joseph; and there were quite a lot of them. Father Costa solved the problem by converting the premises of St Mary into a school for these particular children.

Also the church of St Patrick was becoming too small with the influx of the families of the Irish workers, flocking to build the railroad. Besides this the church was no longer in the centre of the City because of its growth. Fr Costa looked for a site where the city was developing, bought one, and made plans for a new church. This began 1882 and it was blessed and opened in 1884. This is the splendid church of *Corpus Christi* (so called because of Father Costa's great devotion to the Eucharist). It was the fruit of worry, sweat, and a good \$ 45.000. Also in 1886 he built the parish house, or rectory, next to the church. This was large and capable of housing a proper religious community.

In July 1887 Father Costa finally allowed himself a two month holiday in Europe (after 23 years of work!). Naturally he was full of plans. He visited the English houses, he visited the Italian houses, he visited his relations in the region of Biella and Turin, and stayed particularly at Calvario in order to know and speak personally with Father Lanzoni. He had aired with his Bishop a plan for a large high school which would complete a thorough course of education. But where would he get the money for the new building when his people no longer had the energy to back his new venture? And how to be sure of a well prepared teaching staff? Father Costa was able to convince Fr General and obtained from him a financial loan with the promise of an English speaking staff. Moreover he had the gift of the body of Saint Crescens to exhibit for veneration in the new church of Corpus Christi, and which Father Costa had brought with him by boat on his return (as we have said). Meanwhile dark clouds, forerunners of a storm, were gathering over the Institute. On 7 March 1888, Cardinal Monaco La Valletta published the decree of the Holy Office which condemned 40 propositions taken from various works of Rosmini, especially posthumous ones. A dismayed Father Lanzoni wrote about it to Father Costa: 'This is the time in which our obedience is tested severely but it is also necessary to obey authority, and may God's will be done! It is a terrible blow and our "dear" adversaries have triumphed, but we shall continue to serve God blessed "either in disgrace or in good esteem" (letter from Calvario 29. 3. 1888). Other subsequent letters deal with this subject and Father Lanzoni asks for prayers 'in order to obtain the miracle that the teachings of our great Father Founder may prevail' (letter from Turin 1. 5. 1889).

At the beginning of 1889, Father Costa was appointed "Advisor to the Bishop and Vicar Forane". In April he completed the buying of property adjacent to the church in order to build the high school (\$ 5000). On 27. 6. 1890, Father Lanzoni, for the first time, mentioned the possibility of sending to America some companions for Father Costa. These would be John Harrington, a Welshman from Cardiff, by now very close to Ordination (14. 3. 1891) and the Tyrolean lay brother Francesco Foradori, 33 years old, 'strong and highly intelligent in mechanical things' (letter of 26. 2. 1891).

Actually they would leave from Calvario on Easter Monday for England. In mid April they would embark at Liverpool. In the beginning of May the dream which Father Costa had nurtured for so long, of welcoming some brethren with whom he would share all his work, would be realised. 'Try to win their hearts – wrote Father General to Costa on 22. 5. 1891 – and to be more their Father than their Superior, but remember to fix a timetable'.

1892 was an important year for the Galesburg Mission. In the spring the foundation stone of the new high school was laid. On 3 August two other priests left for America, Don Giuseppe Tonello, teacher of French and Music, and Father Ernest Hawley, teacher of Mathematics and Mechanics and future president of the school.

At the end of 1894 the 'Corpus Christi Lyceum' was finished (costing \$ 50.00) and all was ready (including central heating and electricity) for the opening of the new school. But the

beginning of teaching would be postponed for a year for various reasons, not least economic ones. When they finally began with 25 pupils this was the list of the teaching staff:

President: Father Ernest Hawley,
Administrator and Teacher of Religion: Father Joseph Costa,
Teacher of History and Music: Father Giuseppe Tonello,
Teacher of Mathematics and Mechanics: Father Ernest Hawley,
Teacher of English and Natural Sciences: Brother John Phelan, an Irishman 25 years old, who arrived at the end of July to complete the staff (and who would become a priest only in 1908).

The events subsequent to the year 1895 – the year which saw the realisation of Father Costa’s greatest work – turned out quite well, namely, the sending to the noviciate of Wadhurst of the first American vocation; young Henry McCusker in May 1895; the arrival at Galesburg at the end of December 1898 of Father George Doubleday and, in the first months of 1899, of the Belgian, Father Achilles Sheefer; on the negative side were the return to Europe of Father Harrington, the loss of Father Hawley who would become a diocesan priest, and the continual tantrums of Father Tonello. In short, Father Costa, Superior of the American Mission, atoned largely for the sufferings which, as a young man, he inflicted on his superiors at Cardiff. But we have to say that he accepted everything from the hands of God with great faith and humility. His letters bear witness to this. He did not lose heart, and he did not slacken in his apostolic zeal for the souls in his charge.

Father Lanzoni, who predeceased him (5. 1. 1901), admired him and, at the conclusion of all his letters, recommended him to look after his health, as well as taking periods of spiritual relaxation. Father Costa would continue, solid as a rock, to look after the needs of those in his care. In 1908 he would erect the great hospital of St Mary, calling on the Franciscan Sisters, whom he had known in his brief service to the Mission at Bloomington, to manage it. He would buy in the North of the City a large piece of land for a cemetery, and he would form a Society to look after it. He would get clubs and charitable associations running for the solving of specific problems (the Society of Abstainers, already mentioned; the Knights of St Columbus, the Catholic Order of Foresters).

In the Generalitial Decrees of 1899 – 1900, he was nominated, without ever having taken Presbyter vows, Vice Provincial of the American Houses subject to Father Gazzola, Provincial of England and Wales. He would continue in this office officially until his death, even if Father Bernardino Balsari – elected General after the death of Father Lanzoni – in a letter written to Father Doubleday, ordered him to assume ‘the real office of Vice Provincial, leaving to Father Costa simply the title, in order not to make this public’ (letter of 5. 3. 1905). Father Doubleday was then 36 years old and lived in Galesburg only five years and three months. Father Costa was nearly 82, but accepted the generalitial directive as ‘a penance’ for his grave lack of prudence which he committed in communicating to Father General ‘calumnious’ information about certain brethren, without first carefully checking it out. In June – July 1904 Father Bernardino Balsari accompanied by the Provincial Father Aloysius Emery, made the first generalitial visit to the American brethren. Before leaving for Italy, he wrote a fine, long letter (8 pages) to ‘the very dear Fathers and Brothers who serve the Lord at Galesburg in America’, in which he ‘thanks God...for such important works of charity’ which he has experienced there. He congratulates especially Father Costa; gives directions for good progress of the works in the future and gives permission for the purchase of a small house and land adjoining the College. He sends new brethren to help them; he recommends punctual community exercise in works of piety; fraternal charity; appropriate discretion in dealing with externs and the general observance of the Rules (document of 1. 7. 1904).

Father Costa relinquished the office of Parish Priest of Corpus Christi on 12. 10. 1912, but continued to contribute his pastoral experience until he died, “full of good works”, on 2. 2. 1917. He was 93 years and nearly 4 months old, had spent 71 of these in religion and 53 years in America.

He did not leave a cent of debt. He obtained from his people everything he required, he was respected and loved for his moral stature and his gentlemanly character. He was austere with himself, but compassionate towards the poor whom he always dealt with as a father. He was American with the Americans, whom he guided in the faith, but also in the love of their country. On 7. 7. 1927 he was granted United States Citizenship by a solemn academic act (Diocesan Archives n.13.556).

He was buried in the Cemetery of Galesburg as he desired. He lies now in the midst of the graves of many brethren who came after him to work in the vineyard of the Lord which he had strenuously tilled.

i The equivalent of the *portinaio* in the English/Welsh Province would be *prefect of novices*. Part of his job was to lead the novices and postulants to the Chapel and to the Refectory.

ii Now St Madeleine Sophie Barat.