



# The Lange Letter



Oblate Sisters of Providence

Spring 2009

Mother Mary [Elizabeth] Lange Guild News

Issue No. 53

## Mother Mary Lange: Refugee and Immigrant

by Fr. Donald Fest, SSJ

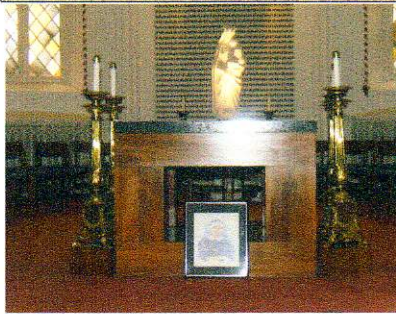
If you look around our country at some of the older cities you might notice the old churches built several generations ago. Many are huge, magnificent structures built by immigrants - people from foreign lands - most who traveled to this land with no more than the clothes on their backs. They came for a better life. They came for opportunity. Many came to escape famine, war, or lack of work back in their own countries.

What is amazing is once they arrived in this country with their meager possessions, these men and women wanted to build -- and indeed did build -- some of the most beautiful churches in our cities. This happened because of their deep and abiding faith which carried them through life, even traveling over an ocean, into a place that was very strange to them. Once here, most of them would not encounter anyone who spoke their language when they left their neighborhoods.

It was no different with Mother Mary Lange. When she arrived on these shores in the port of Baltimore, Maryland, she was merely a young refugee from Haiti with very few possessions. She had many strikes against her: she was a woman, black, a foreigner and she did not speak English - and all this in a slave state. Like all the millions of other immigrants who came to this country, she also helped to build a Church - not one of brick and mortar, but one of souls for Christ. What vision she

see [IMMIGRANT page 2](#)

*Mother Mary Lange, OSP (1784-1882): Haitian immigrant educator, a free woman of color in a slave state who had courage, faith, compassion, unwavering trust in God's providence; founded St. Frances Academy, Baltimore, MD, 1828; foundress of Oblate Sisters of Providence the first religious community for women of color, 1829; candidate for sainthood.*



## PACA STREET, Baltimore, MD, USA

Homily by Fr. John W. Bowen, SS

A pastor was speaking at the 100th anniversary of his parish: "For 100 years priests and people

## Feb. 3rd, A Special Celebration, At St. Mary's Spiritual Center.

of this parish have had only one idea". It was not what he meant literally, but what came through! We are not restricted to one

idea after 127 years since the death of Mother Lange. The liturgical readings give two major ideas and many lesser ones.

In the Gospel of Mark, the woman, afflicted with hemorrhages for 12 years, had faith in Jesus' healing power. Making her way through the crowd, all she did was touch his garments to be healed. One touch and she was healed! Elizabeth Lange, before she became Mother Mary Lange and even after, touched Jesus in her devotion to him in the Eucharist. She touched Jesus in her studies as well as in the generations of students she instructed. She touched Jesus in the sick to whom she volunteered to minister. She touched Jesus in all the oppressed, the hungry, the abandoned. These same people, only with

see [PACA STREET page 2](#)

Above photo: St. Mary's Spiritual Center altar, Mother Lange portrait, BVM statue;

Photo to the right: Feb. 3 concelebrants: Fr. David Arsenault; Deacon, Siegfried Presberry, Fr. John W. Bowen, SS & Fr. John Kemper, SMSC Director.



