Henni celebrated the Feast of the Assumption, preaching to the Indians as Baraga “repeated point by point in the soft Chippewa language.”\(^\text{107}\) He confirmed 122 and left reluctantly only because the vessel back to Sault Ste. Marie would not wait. He was unable to visit the colonies of Fond du Lac and Grand Portage, Minnesota. Baraga would later move to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and his work would be picked up by Franciscan Father Otto Skolla.

Henni arrived home on September 23, in time to greet a new priest, Father Adalbert Inama, who would soon labor to bring Catholicity to Dane County and its surrounding areas. Safely settled in his new home, Henni met with his clerical comrades—Heiss, Kundig, and Thomas Morrissey—who shared the small episcopal residence with him. He now began in earnest nearly 40 years of labor to establish, develop, and spread the Catholic Church throughout Wisconsin. As appealing as he found the missions to the Indians, he devoted the lion’s share of his energies and resources to accommodating the flood of European settlers coming to Wisconsin.

The “Catholicisms” of Wisconsin

The task faced by Henni, and most American bishops, was daunting. On the one hand, they were obliged to uphold episcopal authority and prerogatives and to serve as a source of ecclesial unity. Bishops had to direct both the temporal and spiritual aspects of diocesan life, serve as overseers of the local clergy, and represent the church to civil authorities. Doing this required not only the support of church law and clergy, but also the less tangible skills of inspiring respect and genuine leadership. Throughout his long career, Henni managed to make episcopal authority visible, respected, and effective in the cause of archdiocesan unity. He was a nearly picture perfect model of the kind of bishop envisioned by the reformers of the Council of Trent.

But the mandate of unity was also confronted by the reality of significant ethnic differences. In fact, there was not just one “Catholicism” in Wisconsin, but really multiple “Catholicisms” based largely on ethnic differences. The observation made by Italian scholar Antonio Gramsci is applicable to the history of the archdiocese of Milwaukee: “Every religion, even Catholicism (in fact especially Catholicism, precisely because of its

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efforts to maintain a superficial unity and not allow itself to be fragmented into national churches or along class lines), is really a multiplicity of religions that are distinct and often contradictory.”

Archdiocesan history is, to some degree, a history of “Catholicisms” generated by the forces of ethnicity. At nearly every stage of its history, ethnic considerations have played an important and often defining role in archdiocesan life. Ethnic issues have shaped episcopal selections, the formation of local clergy, the recruitment of sisterhoods, the scope and content of Catholic education, the use of urban space, the character of public celebrations and the provision of social services. Ethnicity is the “second language” of Catholic identity, augmenting the “official” parlance of liturgical, doctrinal, and creedal statements with an argot of “popular” religion.

In the first round of coping with these various “Catholicisms,” German-speaking Catholics established hegemony in parish establishments and institutions of social provision, constituted the bulk of the religious professionals (priests, nuns, and choral directors), and impressed their own distinctive cultural imprints on that elusive category called archdiocesan “character.” German dominance of Milwaukee is what made the See distinct among many American dioceses of similar size and strength. Milwaukee was known nationally and even internationally as “a German diocese” with a German bishop and a German seminary. It was the central headquarters for several large and influential German sisterhoods, the home base for German-language newspapers, and the source of many of the German-speaking priests who served in Wisconsin and throughout the Midwest. This was made possible by the sheer numbers of foreign-born Germans who created dense social networks that made the church a major focus for social, cultural, and intellectual life.

The only group capable of challenging German hegemony were Irish and English-speaking Catholics, who weren’t so numerous as the Teutons, but who nonetheless developed rival institutions, their own professional cadre and a voice in Catholic affairs. The English-speaking were not passive. Although never as numerous as the Germanspeakers, they managed to hold their own in diocesan affairs, and then some. Symbolically, they controlled the cathedral church of the diocese, had their own orphanages and newspapers, and relied on their own teaching sisterhoods and religious orders of men. They also built, as money became available, churches of supreme elegance.

Balancing the competing claims and desires of these two “Catholicisms” occupied much of Bishop Henni’s time (and that of several of his successors). These tasks would become more complicated as other “Catholicisms” made their home in Wisconsin, but in the first generations of Catholic history in Wisconsin, the focus was on the Germans and English-speaking.