When Bishop Blanchet and Father Brouillet reached Vancouver, they found safety—but virtually nothing else. Gold was discovered at Sutter’s Mill on January 24, 1848, just a few weeks after the Whitman massacre. Upon arriving at his new episcopal seat, Bishop Blanchet did not find a flourishing community but “a diocese consisting of ghost towns” because so many had left to seek their fortunes in the California Gold Rush!

The Bishop needed money, but the few Catholics in his new diocese had none to spare. The funds Blanchet had expected to receive from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome were delayed owing to the unrest in Europe. Nor could Blanchet appeal to his brother, the Archbishop of Oregon City. Archbishop Blanchet owed the Archbishop of Oregon City. Archbishop Blanchet owed the Hudson’s Bay Company somewhere in the neighborhood of $50,000!

The brothers put their heads together and decided that if there was money in California, that was where they needed to be, too. They sent Father Brouillet to San Francisco to invite the newly-rich to contribute to the needs of the Church in the Northwest. “Missions are few, struggling, and totally inadequate to the needs of the country,” they wrote in a circular letter that accompanied him. “Thousands of Indians are calling earnestly for instruction and the bread of life, and hardly any one is found in the country to distribute it to them…. In his perplexity, his hope is in you, and he calls on you, confident that you will help him out of this difficulty. He solicits at your hands whatever help your generosity and your zeal for religion may permit you to afford him.” The concluded with a verse from Proverbs: “He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him. Prov. xix.”

Father Brouillet was quite popular in San Francisco—in fact, they wanted to keep him! —and he returned in September, 1850, carrying 250 ounces of gold dust, valued at about $4,000. It was a good start, but they would need much more.

Bishop Blanchet himself resolved to go on a begging tour of his own to Mexico, which was a wealthy—and a very Catholic—nation. He set out in March, 1851, on a journey which would take him through the dioceses of Michoacan, Durango, Mexico City, Puebla, Tamara, and Guadalajara, among others. Blanchet brought with him a circular letter in Spanish. In formal prose the letter outlined the difficulties he faced in his

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