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Blast From the Past: Anti-RC Nativism

Michael Sean Winters | Sep. 2, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

More from my RCIA lecture notes:

The growing number and influence of Catholics, however, produced in many a revival of their anti-Catholic prejudices. It mixed with nativism, the intense dislike of foreigners. In 1834, after an anti-Catholic diatribe by the most prominent preacher of the day, Lyman Beecher, a mob burned the Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts. The writings of Maria Monk, who claimed to have fled the horrors of a convent in Montreal, were widely read even though they were demonstrably, even comically, false. The rise of the Know Nothing Party, which won the governorships in California and Massachusetts and the mayor?s offices in Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington. In May, 1844, three days of public riots consumed Philadelphia after Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick petitioned the city to permit Catholic children use the Douai bible rather than the Protestant King James? version. Bishop Kenrick left the city during the violence fearing his presence as inflammatory. Later that year, in New York, Bishop Hughes, who was a more forceful personality, appealed for the use of state funds which were then exclusively given to a private Protestant society that ran the schools. Again, violence threatened and Hughes stationed armed guards at Catholic churches and said that even one Catholic church was torched, he would engulf the city with flames, making it a second Moscow.

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