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Open Doors

An Original Story, by a Convert

Written for the Catholic Journal

Continued from last week

"Always open, isn't it, Marie?"

"Yes, of course!" The children seemed to wonder at Marion's question.

"There it is, over there." Marion pointed down the street. "Won't you come and see the manger with us?"

Marion nodded. She had never been in a Catholic Church before. Something in the children's confidence seemed to warm her; she took them, one in each hand, and let them lead her to the door.

"You must cross yourself," Marie told her.

"How?"

"Like this." Marie dipped her fingers in the shell held by a big white angel and reverently made the sign of the Cross. Marion watched her closely and did as best she could with her frozen fingers.

At the entrance of the center aisle she stopped. A giddiness seized her and she caught the end of a pew for support. It soon passed away and she was able to lift her head and look around her. The Church was dusky in the gathering twilight; the candles were the only lights as yet. Down in front and to one side, groups of candles lighted brilliantly a grotto made to represent a cave. The two children had left Marion and were kneeling before it. To Marion, it was a wonderful picture, she had never seen a child kneeling in prayer or adoration before. She watched them for a moment. Then her gaze turned to the altar. She admired the polished gold and the purity of the white marble. She was fascinated by the mystery of the little red lamp that glowed so like a ruby in the dusky shadows. Everything was so peaceful, and so strange.

There had been no Catholic Church in the little village where she had lived all her life. Of course she had heard of it, but the Protestant reports were not encouraging. So this was what it was like, this big warm Church with open doors.

"Open doors," she repeated the words to herself. "Always open, all the year around." Then she looked at the little red lamp and smiled. "This is a true house of God," she whispered softly. "Jesus Christ is here."

Marion felt a pull on her jacket and looked down. The smaller child was standing beside her, looking up into her face.

"Won't you come and see the manger?" she asked softly.

Marion allowed the little child to lead her down the aisle. Her fingers were smarting badly and the warmth was making her feel drowsy after her long exposure. She felt tired and her whole body ached. Guided by the little girl, she knelt before the tiny stable. Her head swam and her vision was blurred. Objects seemed to be floating about her; the candles danced giddily. She was roused from this chaos by a voice which seemed to be speaking tenderly to her: "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you."

The candles stopped dancing and her head became steady and clear. She was looking straight into the eyes of the infant in the manger and His arms seemed to be stretched out to her. Love and tenderness shone in His eyes, Marion worshipped Him.

Slowly she looked from one figure to another; at the Blessed Virgin she paused. "She will be a mother to me now that my one is gone," Marion thought. She looked at the sheep and the rough wooden manger filled with hay. "Jesus was poor," she reflected, "and he will care for me."

A great gladness filled her heart. She was happy in spite of her aching hands and feet. She knelt there a long time. Gradually the lights died out from her vision, and she became enveloped in a grateful darkness.

It seemed like years to Marion before the darkness lifted. She could not remember anything at first, but later she seemed to be living in a confused dream of fancifully wrought iron bars that pressed against her and held her back, beyond which, a dainty little girl with long, beautiful curls caught at floating snowflakes and laughingly tossed them into her face, of a leaping fire which froze her when she looked at it, of a big church and a big white-haired man who kept saying, while he played with a child on his knee, "I am very busy with my grand-daughter just now, you will have to make a special appointment," all these and more crowded through Marion's tired brain.

Finally they passed away, and Marion found herself looking up into a sweet face bent over her. Marion smiled a wan, weak little smile and shut her eyes wearily. Again the darkness closed around her, but it was the darkness of deep quiet sleep.

When she awakened, a white-capped nurse came quickly to her. Marion realized then that she was in bed in a large room with several other beds besides hers.

The nurse spoke quietly, "You are feeling better now, aren't you?"

"Yes," she answered. "I'm much better. I guess I must have been nearly frozen."

"Well, you never will be again," reassured the nurse.

"I—I hope not," Marion emphasized the "hope."

"Of course you won't, dear. Don't worry, you have true friends now. But you must rest, rest all you can and get well and strong again. I must go now, dear, but I'll come back soon. Sleep if you can, it will do you good."

Marion watched the plump, rosy-cheeked nurse as she went quietly from bed to bed. She admired the fresh blue and white uniform and the big white apron; she thought the little white cap was charming; but it was the big grey-blue eyes with the sympathy shining out of them that she loved. Then she remembered the face that was bending over her when she had first awakened. It was not this one, she knew, it was even lovelier.

"Could it have been an angel?" she puzzled, "or, perhaps it was the Virgin Mary, herself." Marion remembered the little statue bending over the tiny manger in the Church.

Just then, someone came into the room and spoke to the nurse. Marion had never seen anyone dressed that way before. She wondered who it could be. But she did not have to wonder long, for the little lady in the strange garb came over to her bed and Marion recognized the sweet smiling face.

"I am Sister Gertrude Marie," she said. "You have been quite sick, but you are getting so much better now, we will soon have you well again."

"Sister Gertrude Marie," Marion said softly. "What a beautiful name. You were here before, were you not? I remember your face. I thought you were an angel, or," she hushed her voice into a reverent whisper, "the Virgin Mary."

The little Sister smiled. "That is a great compliment, dear; I'm not worthy of it. I'm only a human being like you, dear, although I am a Sister of Charity."

Marion and Sister Gertrude Marie became fast friends during the next few days. Marion looked forward to seeing her every day. She asked her questions and the answers were given so clearly and willingly that Marion kept on asking and soon she began to think over seriously everything that the Sister had said.

One day, the nurse bundled her up in blankets and let her sit at the window in the sunshine. Outside, the world was still white and sparkling. Marion looked over at the big Church on the other side of the street.

"That must be where the children took me that day," she said to herself, "as she watched the doors, opening every little while to admit worshippers or to let

them out. The doors are open before the darkness lifted. She and it is not Sunday. Truly, that is God's House."

Later, the Sister, came in to see her. Marion looked up at her with a new light in her eyes.

"Sister," she said, "Sister Gertrude Marie, I want to be a Catholic, too. Can I be baptized?"

About a year after that a girl in nurses uniform and long coat slipped out of Saint Michael's Hospital, crossed the street and entered the Church. It was Marion Dey on her way to Confession. After she had performed her penance, she went down the aisle to the corner where the clustered candles lit up the rocky stable and the Holy Christ Child in His manger. The candlelight showed a decided change in Marion; her face was round, her cheeks were pink, and her eyes were filled with love and happiness.

Kneeling there, she thought of the first time she had seen that beautiful picture and her eyes filled with grateful tears as she gazed on the tiny Christchild.

"I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you."

She heard the tender words again, and from her heart she whispered: "Thank You, Blessed Lord Jesus, thank You for Open Doors."

The End

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary

At St. Mary's church, Geneseo, N. Y., on Tuesday, December 1st, was held a service that marked an important event in the history of that parish. Twenty-five years ago December 1st, mass was celebrated for the first time in the beautiful new edifice just then completed. Of those who officiated at the services on that occasion was Rev. James Hartley, now Monsignor Hartley, of St. Bernard's Seminary, and Rev. James A. Hickey, retired from active service owing to ill health, survive.

Twenty-five years bring many changes in the life of a community as well as in that of the individual, many of those present on that occasion have long since passed to their reward, and among the youth of those days are the men of today.

Of the several priests who have administered to the spiritual needs of this flock from its beginning only the following survive: Rev. Richard Story, still in active service at Brockport, where he has been pastor for fifty years; Rev. J. J. Donnelly, of Victor, N. Y.; Rev. James A. Hickey, of Rochester, to whom the parish of St. Mary's and the village of Geneseo, are largely indebted for the untiring zeal in erecting the beautiful and commodious church an ornament to the village of Geneseo and the pride of the parishioners of St. Mary's; Rev. Arthur Hughes, Rochester, whose zeal and labors in the parish are still fresh in the minds of the people of Geneseo.

Rt. Rev. Bishop Thomas F. Hickey administered the sacrament of confirmation to a class of thirty-six. The bishop spoke in a most impressive manner to the children of the importance of exercising in their lives the moral virtues that were taught within those walls; duty of honesty, purity and sobriety. He congratulated the people of St. Mary's for their co-operation in the work of the parish and prayed God to continue His blessings upon them.

The bishop at the close of the ceremony administered the pledge to the class to abstain from all intoxicating drinks at least until they reached of 21 years.

The celebrant of the mass was Rev. George T. Jones; deacon, Rev. Arthur A. Hughes, of Rochester; sub-deacon, Rev. P. J. McArdle, of Scottsville; master of ceremonies, Rev. George Kettell, S. T. B. of Mt. Morris; censor bearer, Rev. Philip Golding, Churchville; the bishop's assistants, Rev. Wm. Darcy, Avon; Rev. M. C. Wall, Danville; Rev. Walter McCarthy, Sonyea.

The children's choir sang the mass; Mrs. Wintrop Chanler was the organist, and Mrs. W. A.

Dwyer, assistant, thus auspiciously closed the first quarter of a century of St. Mary's church.

"Protest Day"

Windthorst Study Circle Issues Protest.

"Service for Service Sake" was the subject which John Ready, M. D., took for his lecture before the Windthorst Study Circle in Holy Redeemer Hall, Hudson Avenue, last Friday evening. The speaker reviewed the part that the Catholic layman should take in present day affairs and pointed out the motives that should actuate him in all his activities. In rendering service he should not look to the personal gain that might come to him, but should be moved only by the thought that he is rendering a service for the good of the state and of his Church.

One point of peculiar interest in the Speaker's address was the reference he made to the manner in which Catholic laymen should meet the questions that are put to them by non-Catholics. When questioned by non-Catholics, he said, Catholic laymen should not be ashamed to say that they were not able to explain some of the more difficult problems of Catholic theology. The way to meet these questions is by the reply, that this information can be obtained by the questioner if he will call at any Catholic rectory and ask the parish priest. Parish priests, he said, are only too willing to answer questions of non-Catholics. This fact, he continued, is not generally known by non-Catholics.

The Circle directed that the following letter be sent to each of the Monroe County representatives in Congress. It was sent accordingly on Sunday last, so as to be in their hands on Tuesday, December 9th, which was "Protest Day." "Protest Day" was the day chosen by Catholics throughout the country to enter a general protest to the authorities in Washington against the privileges of the mail be continued to the publications that are carrying on a base and wanton attack on the Catholic Church. The letter is as follows:

"Dear Sir: For a year or more the United States mail has been flooded with publications designed to stir up hatred of the Catholic Church, its institutions, its priesthood, and its sisterhoods. Formerly this diabolical work was carried on in a secret way, and on a small scale. But the time has come when the fomenters of religious strife have become bold and have come out into the open. These publications have not confined themselves to attack the teachings of the Catholic Church, they have made indecent assaults upon its most cherished institutions and respected members. To escape the law they have invented fictitious persons upon whom to inflict the venom of their vile imaginations. Only a year or two ago these publications printed a story of the misconduct of an alleged Catholic priest of this city, but after investigation, it was shown that no Catholic priest of the name given was living in Rochester or had ever lived in Rochester.

"It is unnecessary to remind men of your experience of the character of the Catholic priests and sisters of Rochester; their lives and their actions are too well known to you.

"The Constitution of the United States guarantees to every man the right to speak and print what he pleases, so long as he does not injure another, and so long as he does not violate the public policy of the government. It needs no argument to convince you that the policy of this government is that its citizens shall live in peace and harmony and that every man shall be allowed to practice whatever religion he pleases, so long as it does not consist in licentiousness or in undermining the government; and the privilege of the mails is afforded all on equal terms to propagate their ideas; but to no one does the right belong to circulate filthy and obscene stories concerning the adherents of any religion.

The Windthorst Study Circle has been formed to spread correct ideas upon government, upon economics and upon religion. It meets every week and is attended by hundreds of your Catholic constituents.

"Its sense of justice is shocked each week by the appearance of fresh filth and fresh lies printed in these publications whose only excuse for existence is to attack the Catholic Church, its institutions and those consecrated to its service. These publications in particular are the *Melting Pot*, *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine* and the *American Citizen*. There are others, but these are the chief ones.

"Now, as citizens of the city of Rochester, and of the United States, we request you to take up with the Postmaster-General the matter of excluding these publications from the mail, and to request him to withhold the privileges of the mail from them until such time as they can prove to the satisfaction of the Postmaster-General of the United States that they contain no matter of an indecent and degrading character. Canada long ago barred from her mails these menaces to good government. Is the public policy of the United States of an inferior character to that of Canada?"

"Each and every Catholic in Rochester might write to the Postmaster-General protesting against the privileges of the mails being granted to these publications, but we feel that in a representative republic the proper way to bring about this result is through our duly elected representatives in Congress. It is, therefore, with this assurance that we address this letter to each of our representatives; and feel that it is only necessary to remind them of the wishes of their constituents to have those wishes respected, and the wrongs they are suffering righted.

"Assuring you of our sincere regard, we are,

Very respectfully yours,
The Windthorst Study Circle,
Joseph T. Otto, President."

News From Ireland

M. Molloy, M. P., presided at the annual meeting of the Catholic divisional committee of the U. I. L., when officers were elected as follows: M. Govey, president; Rev. Father Gorry, M. P., vice president; J. J. Duggan, treasurer; J. Conlann, county representative on general executive; and J. R. Lawlor, honorary secretary.

Diligent work for two hours by the people of the town succeeded in quenching a serious fire which broke out in Messrs. J. Atkins & Company's stores, Glonakilly.

After leaving church John Nicholls, J. P., of Mawbeg House, Bandon, became suddenly ill, and expired before medical assistance arrived.

For the seventeenth time Sir James Long has been unanimously re-elected chairman of the Cork Harbor Board.

The profession took place recently in the Benedictine Convent, Milan, of Miss May J. Colhoun, in religion Sister Mary Imelda, a daughter of the late E. Colhoun, Waterside, Derry. Parochial collections have been made in the Catholic churches of the Diocese of Derry for the national relief and Belgian relief funds and the sums contributed amount to £1558.

The death is announced November 3, at his residence, Dring Quigley's Point, of Captain Glacken.

The Most Rev. Dr. O'Dea has been appointed a member of the Intermediate Board.

Dr. Robert A. MacLavery has been elected master of Coombe hospital, his term of office commencing on December 17 next.

Catholic News

The theory of the Catholic University Law School received an additional impetus about a week ago when the school dedicated to Thanksgiving day.

A memorial chapel is to be erected on the site of the residence of Father Aulneau, S. J., at St. Charles, Miss.

A parochial school with about 2500, 600 has been opened by the Church of St. Mary, Lancasters, Brooklyn.

San Francisco is to have a Catholic Truth Society. Rev. Thomas Cullen, C. S. C., rector of old St. Mary's, is at the head of the movement, which is generally approved by St. Rev. Edward J. Hanna, the archbishop of the diocese.

Rev. Mother Stanislaus of the Convent of the Incarnate Word in Brownsville, Texas, recently celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of her profession.

The beautiful new church and school building of St. Joseph in Peotone, Ill., was dedicated recently by Rt. Rev. Edmund Dunne.

Rev. John E. Burke, director general of the mission work among the colored people, has been made a Domestic Frater.

The Church is growing in the State of Wisconsin. At Oconomowoc a new \$100,000 St. Constantine Church has been begun.

Prof. Teillard and Rev. G. M. Sauvage, of the Catholic University's financing staff, will return to their chairs because of the war. Six new instructors have been added to the faculty.

Very Rev. L. F. Kattner, O. P., the eloquent Dominican preacher, has become a member of the Zambeville, O., Chamber of Commerce.

Rt. Rev. Patrick J. Donahue, D. D., has dedicated the new church at Grantown, West Virginia, and confirmed a large class.

Bishop Heavy, of the Anglican Order, is the newly consecrated Vicar Apostolic of Queensland, Australia.

In a letter to Cardinal Camerota, the head of the Society of St. Jerome for the Diffusion of the Gospel, the Supreme Pontiff has edict XV prizes and blessed and its work.

At the well-known cemetery of Civita Vecchia, in Italy, two Russian tombs were discovered, dating from the fifth century.

Mgr. Bressan, late Secretary of Pius X, is now a Canon of St. John Lateran's, and Mgr. Pizzini, also secretary of Pius X, will be made a Canon of St. Mary Major's.

The late Archbishop Hawley of St. John's, Newfoundland, was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and of the Society of Antiquaries, Ireland.

The Chinese in their own country, make good Catholics.

The sacred body of St. Rose of Viterbo, who died in 1233, is venerable and uncorrupt. It is in the Church of the Poor Clares at Viterbo. The Church is being renovated at a cost of \$70,000.

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