

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH—Diocesan Organization

A Civic Greeting and Welcome

to the

MOST REVEREND

JAMES EDWARD KEARNEY, D. D.

Fifth Bishop of Rochester

from

Officials of Monroe County

MONROE COUNTY

REPUBLICAN

COMMITTEE

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HENRY D. SHEDD, Special County Judge



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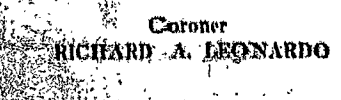
JESSE B. HANNAN, County Director of Public Welfare



W. RAYMOND WHITELEY, Purchasing Agent



CLARENCE A. SMITH, County Manager



RICHARD A. LEONARDO, Coroner

Officials of Monroe County

The Church can be studied in its central organization or in its different branches or in its units throughout the world.

That grand organization in its central aspect is indeed to be wondered at and admired. Now, in order to do its work more efficiently, the Church divides its territory, namely the entire world in accordance with the Roman adage "divide and rule."

The most important of the minor divisions is the diocese. It is the main unit of territorial division. Christian life has its center and its heart in the diocese or its equivalent. If we have to deal with mission lands, the diocese is a portion of territory that the Pope assigns. It is quite extensive and can be easily divided from the size of the diocese of Rochester in the United States, sometimes a whole State has but one ecclesiastical division called the diocese. An example can be had in the State of North Carolina. Sometimes, in other States, there are three and four in proportion to the number of Catholics in the State and the extent of territory to be covered.

From these reports the Pope may readily estimate the value of the Shepherd of the Fold. There is no doubt of it. The Bishop is told to simply answer the questions ever mindful that some day before God these answers will be read and evaluated at their worth. Our civil officials would do well to read that page from the book of the Church and learn what is contained therein.

Diocesan Structure

The diocese are coordinated units in the diocese of a certain State. They are coordinated into provinces. An ecclesiastical Province is a group of dioceses in a certain section and each one is ruled over by a Bishop, but the entire group is placed under the supervision of an Archbishop, usually the Bishop of the most important diocese in the given section. Thus in the State of New York we have the ecclesiastical province of New York. The Cardinal Archbishop of New York is at its head in the New York province are the dioceses of Rochester, Ogdensburg, Albany, Buffalo, Brooklyn. The Archbishop has certain prerogatives of honor, but little or no jurisdiction unless in very few cases he is a general overseer of the territory. The Bishop of the Province would be the logical superior to install the bishop of one of his provincial branches.

Unit Organization

Now the diocese and its organization bears marked resemblance to the organization of the Universal Church in its central unit in Rome. The diocese revolves around and about the Bishop, just as the Roman Pontiff, the Holy Father. The Bishop is the personification of the different branches of authority, legislative, judicial and executive. All others act in union and because of his mandate or because directly. The Bishop is in close union with the Holy Father.

We deem it more acceptable to think of the Bishop acting by right divine in his diocese. We believe that God has conferred upon Him the right to rule over the diocese. He is God's representative here in this given territory and some day the Good Shepherd will ask the Bishop, to render account of the progress of his diocese. The Bishop receives that power from God through the Roman Pontiff. The Bishop's commission from the Holy Father entails the concession of the authority by God. Thus the Bishop comes in virtue of power that has come to him from God. He rules in his own right, but also in union and under the authorization of the Pope but he is not the Pope's delegate.

Bishop: The Authority

The Bishop has legislative power but that power always to be used in accordance and never contrary to Canon Law, the universal law of the Church. His duty is to apply the common law, to safeguard the spirit and letter of the law in his diocese and perhaps to supply for the cases that are not foreseen in the prescriptions of the Code. He may enact new laws that will attain the end desired by the universal law in a more direct and precise fashion.

The Bishop too exercises judicial power. In certain matters he will bring before him the Bishop as the Judge. He very often delegates this judicial power since the Bishop is a Father and the Good Shepherd. And while he is the Father and the Good Shepherd, he is also the Defender of the Faith. He is the representative of the executive power and the administrative power in the diocese. It is part of his responsibility to see that the diocese is well administered from every point of view including the financial side. It is up to the Bishop to appoint remove pastors, to create new parishes, to name assistant priests, to provide for the future of his clergy and his parishes, etc.

Bishop: Spiritual Father

The Bishop is the Spiritual Guide of his flock. He is the teacher of faith and morals. It is of the excellence of his position that we all look to him to keep the deposit of faith intact, pure and unaltered within the confines of his territory. In this, the Bishop reaches the culmination of his Office. He is not merely a witness of the Truth, nor a simple spokesman, not someone who repeats something that he has heard said.

The Bishop is truly a Doctor, a Master in things divine—in the explanation of the Word of God. It is his most sacred duty to explain, to teach that Word of God. It is his task to spread that Word, to safeguard the deposit of faith, to ward off all danger as to the letter and the spirit of that deposit. He should always be ready to be a witness to the fact that within his diocese the Word of God is being preached and practiced in a manner befitting and becoming its Author. It is matter of faith and morals, religious practices that the Bishop realizes the tremendous import of His Charge.

People may see the splendor of the Office, the beauty of the robes, the

reference and deference paid to our beloved Bishops, yet the Bishop Himself, alone with God, knows the stern reality that underlies the appearance.

It is a source of deep edification and a lesson in the reality of the supernatural Mission of the Episcopacy to read the many and the varied and searching questions that the Bishop must answer every five years as part of his report to the Holy Father. It is in this report that the Holy Father reminds the Bishop of the reality and the tremendous task that he has undertaken before Almighty God. The questions leave no part of his mission without verification and inquiry. They are touched with no human sympathy nor caution nor benignity. They call for precise and brief answers and from these answers the Holy Father will form a very exact picture of the work of God being done in every diocese of the world.

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Bishop: Teacher, Preacher

The Bishop then is the Great Teacher of the diocese. He is the virtue of divine right has the task and the duty to preach the Word of God. The Pope enjoys the same right in the universal Church. The Bishop holds the same position in the diocese in which He has been assigned. All others preach by cause of the mandate of the Bishop. Priests receive from the Bishop the mandate to preach the Word of God to the faithful. The Bishop then has manifold duties. He does not fulfill them all alone. He has the Roman Pontiff, his many Auxiliaries.

The Vicar General

In the first place there is the Vicar General. The Vicar General is the substitute of the Bishop in the diocese. When the Bishop is absent when he is all disposed if he is overburdened, then it is the Vicar General who assumes his duties. He has all the powers in the administrative affairs that the Bishop possesses and in the virtue of the law of the Church. He must however use them in accordance and according to the will of the Bishop and the law of the Church. He is the representative of the Bishop in the diocese. He is the Bishop's delegate. He is the Bishop's representative in the diocese. He is the Bishop's representative in the diocese. He is the Bishop's representative in the diocese.

The Official

Just as the Vicar General represents and acts for the Bishop in the administration of the diocese, the Official acts for the Bishop in the sphere of the judiciary. All cases bearing an ecclesiastical trial and law suits are handled by the Official instead of by the Bishop. These require so much attention and such precise attention that it is not presumed that the Bishop would say the leisure to attend to them. So another is delegated by law to take his place. If the Bishop so desires.

Prosecutor of Justice

To assure good order and respect for law and justice the Bishop has amongst his aides a priest called the Promotor of Justice. It is to him that the Bishop refers when he wishes to be advised as to the course of procedure to be followed in a particular and involved situation. This person weighs the matter and takes the defense of the Public Order and God within the diocese. It is his duty to assure the diocese of order and strict justice and to him is committed the care of all difficult cases of justice.

Defender of the Bond

In the matrimonial court and in the diocesan Court of the Bishop we find the Defender of the Marriage Bond. When someone asks the Bishop and his Court to examine the legal aspect of his marriage, it is called upon by the Bishop to examine the case presented but with one thing in mind to gather all evidence possible that will safeguard that sacred bond of marriage.

It is the duty of the Defender to represent, defend and protect the bond of marriage. The validity of which is always presumed to exist after the marriage ceremony has apparently been accomplished. Through him the Bishop has the assurance that Truth and Justice will be more aptly served and known.

Chancellor

In the administrative work of the diocese, and particularly as regards the redaction of records and the expedition of so much correspondence the Bishop is aided by his chancellor and his vice-chancellor. They are responsible for all that their names imply.

Counsellors

Thus far all these ecclesiastical personages have been assigned very definite tasks and necessary parts in the life of the diocese. We may now turn to the counsellors of the Bishop. First of all we have Parish Priest Counsellors to whom the Bishop refers questions involving the parishes of his diocese. particular questions on the conduct and the administration of these parishes. Then come the Synodal Exam-

iners. These Examiners are priests upon whom the Bishop relies for the certification and the scholastic guidance of the younger clergy of the diocese. They also have the task of assuring the Bishop of the doctrinal orthodoxy of the candidates proposed for the important functions of the diocese. In some places, these Examiners must pass judgment upon the doctrine and the capability of those who seek to preach within the diocese, also for all who are to be named pastors or to be placed in charge of parishes.

Amongst all the counsellors of the Bishop, the most important and necessary are the Diocesan Counsellors. These priests usually form the senate of the Bishop. They are his chief counsellors on all matters concerning the diocese. They must be distinguished by their prudence and their ability. This body of Counsellors is usually composed of six prelates or pastors and the Bishop is required by the universal law to submit for their approval and consent, certain projects for other projects he may only ask for their counsel but is not held to follow it.

Thus the Bishop is surrounded on all sides with means of attaining decisions which will bespeak prudence and perfection insofar as the spiritual welfare of the people is concerned. These means will manifest after having made use of all these aids through which God may speak or through whom His Grace may act.

So far we have considered the government of the Church in a particular diocese. What of these juridical institutions have their bearing more or less on the spiritual life of the diocese we have yet to speak of that office which par excellence touches and directs the spiritual progress of the people. We now come to the parish and the pastor.

Parish and Pastor

In the early Church, the entire diocese was but one parish. There would be one priest, the Bishop, who would perform the priestly functions and he was the Bishop. All other priests assisted the Bishop and formed as it were a body of counsellors but did not partake any too actively in the spiritual administration of the diocese. Gradually the Church began to spread out into places far distant from the episcopal residence. Priests were sent to those places with the power to administer to the spiritual wants of the people not only as the delegate and in the name of the Bishop. This was the case in the third and fourth centuries in Italy, France, Spain and other European states as well as in Africa and the Orient.

One may safely presume that toward the end of the fourth century and surely during the fifth, these priests who were simple delegates in the beginning, became titular heads of these small territorial divisions or parishes. From the different names of the Councils of the Church held during these centuries we find that these small divisions the diocese began to possess in their right and name. The temporal administration of these acquisitions was confided to the priest and along with the temporal administration the priest acquired the right to administer the parish in his own name even from the spiritual standpoint. Parishes are recognized by most of the codes as an institution of the law. So another is delegated by law to take his place. If the Bishop so desires.

To assure good order and respect for law and justice the Bishop has amongst his aides a priest called the Promotor of Justice. It is to him that the Bishop refers when he wishes to be advised as to the course of procedure to be followed in a particular and involved situation. This person weighs the matter and takes the defense of the Public Order and God within the diocese. It is his duty to assure the diocese of order and strict justice and to him is committed the care of all difficult cases of justice.

One belonged to the Church, without any special affiliations, any determined section or under the guidance of any particular priest would easily it would be to become indifferent to lose interest and to follow the way that suited human frailty best. How different when we are affiliated with a particular church and parish and we are assigned in the care of one priest who knows himself to be in charge of your spiritual guidance and well-being and who will take a personal interest in you and perhaps be the helping hand when the struggle becomes too burdensome for us all alone.

From what has preceded we can now draw the picture of a parish. It is a minor division of the diocese. This minor division is as it were withdrawn from the immediate care of the bishop and given to a priest who will rule it in a very direct fashion in his own name and right but always under the supervision and because of the mandate conferred upon him by the Bishop.

Parish: Constitution

The Bishop determines the limits of the Parish. The ordinary parish is territorial and embraces as its members all who live within its boundaries. The domicile is the determining feature of the parishioner. There are some parishes which are constituted or determined by the language or nation of origin of a group. The example of this is the case of the parishes of the Holy Family. This is an example of how the Church wished to make itself One for All, and wishes to reach souls under all circumstances and at all costs. These parishes do find little or no great utility as most of the population can now understand the language of the country sufficiently well so as not to suffer any inconvenience nor neglect territorial parishes.

Parish Status

The true aspect of a parish then is simply this: It is a part of the diocese which has been assigned to

the direct and immediate care of a particular priest and this for one thing only, that the souls of the people residing within its limits might be better cared for. It is then one spiritual family and the father of that family is the Reverend Pastor who will some day be called upon to answer before God for the salvation of the souls confided to him. There is a bond between spiritual and legal between the pastor and the parish members. He is in justice bound to administer to his parishioners and his parishioners are bound to receive their spiritual ministrations from him at least as general law and this is the ideal of the law, code.

The pastor then follows his sheep through life and it is not surprising then that the Code of Canon Law gives to the pastor the right to baptize children of his parishioners. It is his exclusive right to marry them. It is his right to bury them. It is his right and duty to attend them when they are sick and are indeed of the last sacraments. These are his rights and his obligations and they belong to him as to the father of the family. It is not astonishing then that the Pastor of the parish be rigorously inquisitive and deeply-pained should one of his spiritual family die without his ministrations and his solace.

We have already described the role and the duties of the pastors. The role of the pastor is indeed most important in the life of the people. The pastor in his capacity has not only to attend to the spiritual welfare of his parish but also to the temporal welfare. With the aid of the trustees it is his duty to keep the parish in good health financially and to meet all his obligations as best and honorably as his means allow.

Parish Appurtenances

The parish unit is the church, the rectory, the school and the convent. If all these elements are present we have a complete parish and all that is necessary to promote and foster and spread God's Message. Of course all these buildings are a great strain upon the parish and people and consequently in many places have to be content with the essentials, namely a place of worship and the priests to conduct the church services and to care for the souls of the territory.

The parish as a corporation owns all these buildings and the furnishings. An accounting is maintained for all purchases and expenditures of money. The accounts of the parish are carefully kept and for every item there must be a record. Money given to the parish is exclusively used for parish purposes. The pastor is required to submit a financial report to the Bishop every year and the financial statement is studied by the Bishop. For the expenditure of a large sum of money written permission is required from the Bishop as that is a grave matter, especially when retained and moved. Like in all things else even in this matter conscience is the guide of the Bishop and the Pastor. They realize that a parish is a very important unit and that they must have the administration of it.

Parish Records

We made mention of records in the above paragraph. The pastor can well be proud of it. The parish maintains a complete set of books. All baptisms are recorded with the name of the baptized, the parents, the godparents, etc. so that a church record is established in civil law. It is sometimes far more accurate than the entry to be found on the books of the State. There is also a book for the confirmation classes of the church. All marriages are duly recorded in an other book with the names of the bride and groom and proof of the ceremony. All deaths are registered in a book for that purpose. Lastly the parish has a complete set of census cards, a complete set of the parishioners and their information on the census.

From the preceding information one can conclude that the parish is a very important efficient unit of organization. The parish has all the necessary instruments to attain success in its given sphere. Aided by the natural resources of its good members and animated by the zeal and pastoral solicitude of men of God, there is no reason why a parish should not merit well in the eyes of the Good Shepherd. Thus we bring to a close a very incomplete yet adequate study of Church organization. It is not a complicated organism. It is admirable in its unity and in its simplicity.

HONOR MEMORY OF MOTHER CABRINI

VATICAN CITY His Holiness Pope Pius XI has approved the heroism of the virtues of Mother Francis Xavier Cabrini. The reading of the decree took place last Sunday in the presence of the Holy Father. Mother Cabrini, foundress of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, took in religion the name of Francis Xavier of the Infant Jesus. Her death occurred 20 years ago on December 22, 1917. A native of Italy, where she was born July 15, 1850, her name is most generally associated with the Church in the United States. She died in Chicago and her body is buried in New York. She was sent to America by His Holiness Pope Leo XIII, to whom she went for advice when she was considering going to China. Afterwards she crossed the ocean 24 times, opening houses of her community in North, Central and South America, but chiefly in the United States.