

Benedictine Dies

Atchison, Kan. — The Rev. Alphonse Francis Kilian O.S.B., 80-year-old monk of St. Benedict's Abbey, has died. Though on the retired list for the past several years, he had enjoyed excellent health, participating in the liturgical choir services of the community only three hours before his death.

CELEBRATES JUBILEE

London. — To celebrate the silver jubilee of his priesthood the Apostolic Delegate to Great Britain, the Most Rev. William Godfrey, returned to the Liverpool Archdiocese, to which he originally belonged, to say his jubilee Mass in the Church of St. Peter and Paul, Great Crosby. His mother and other relatives and old friends were present.

Rev. Dr. Owen B. McGuire

A Christmas Ode By An Irish Nun 1400 Years Ago

Christmas is a time for song and poetry. As I am neither a songwriter nor a poet, I cannot offer the readers of the CATHOLIC COURIER anything of my own in this field of endeavor. But just the other day I was reading a Christmas ode composed by an Irish nun 1400 years ago, and it occurred to me that for many reasons it might be of interest to readers of the COURIER in general, and in particular to the good nuns who during the year have been teaching our children in the schools or caring for the sick and sorrowing in our hospitals. There is in this country no group — if I may use the term of Catholics to whom the Church (and that means you and yours and me and mine) owes so much. Therefore this little Christmas essay is dedicated to the Sisters of the Diocese of Rochester.

But let us first see the ode and then the remarks I wish to make on it will be more intelligible.

Isacan

The Original Title

Isacan my little cell within,
What were wealth of cleric high
All is lie but Jesukin.
Nursling nurtured as 'tis right —
Harbors here no servile aprile
Jesu of the skies who art
Next my heart through every night.
Jesukin my good for aye,
Callings and will not have nay,
King of all things, ever true,
He shall rue who will away
Jesu, more than angels' aid
Fostering nor forned to fade,
Nursed by me in desert wild,
Jesu, Child of Judith's Maid
Sons of Kings and Kingly Kin
To my lord may enter in
Guest of none I hope to be
Save of Thee, my Jesukin!
Unto heaven's High King Confest
Sing a chorus, maidens blest!
He is o'er us, though within
Jesukin is on my breast!

St. Ita (pronounced eelah) was born about 400 and, according to Cardinal Moran and Archbishop Healy, St. Patrick died in 493. It is quite possible, accordingly, that Ita met the Apostle and received his blessing. When one has read the little poem, his first impulse will be to thank God that he is a Catholic, for the poem is thoroughly and essentially Catholic. It could be written only by a Catholic, or by one steeped in Catholic tradition and breathing the atmosphere of a Catholic ambient. In perusing it we come face to face with the Christian religion as it was in Ireland 1400 years ago and we recognize it immediately as our very own the same even in its sentiments of piety and in its devotional expression, the same yesterday and today and forever. It reveals the Catholic heart throbbing with faith and love the burning personal love of the Saviour, the impulse to contemplate Him under the tenderest human form as he was presented to the world in the arms of a Mother, the love that drives out fear, the intimate but reverent familiarity with the God made Man for love of us, for love of you and me and Ita these are all Catholic things and are as familiar to the Catholicity of the 20th century as we here see them to have been to the Catholicity of the 5th and 6th.

NO MAN CAN APPRECIATE

But, as already intimated, it is the Catholic nun who can fully appreciate St. Ita's poem and fully penetrate its spirit. It lays bare her soul if we could but see it and understand — it reveals the character of her love and makes intelligible her sacrifice.

In the 16th century St. Teresa of Avila probably the greatest woman born in Christendom wrote a poem on this very same theme, and in the 19th century St. Teresa of Lisieux treated the subject in one of those poems which if they lack art have the charm of simplicity and infantile grace. Comparing the poem of the Irish nun of 1400 years ago with that of the Spanish nun of the 16th century and with that of the French nun of the 19th we find indeed a great difference in poetic construction and some difference in the modes of expression, but the ideas above referred to and the sentiments expressed under different forms are not only similar but identical. And the Sister whom you see in 1941 walking along the street in her black habit or brown as the case may be or kneeling before the tabernacle, has the same ideals and the same sentiments towards the same Supreme Object of her life though she be not a poet.

We have here, as I have said, the key to an explanation of the Catholic nun's sacrifice and the joy she finds in having made it. What does she for "Sons of Kings and Kingly Kin"? Such suitors can never win her heart. She has formed a more constant and enduring love. In its light and in its enjoyment every other seems a vapor, transient, illusory, unreal. "All is lie but Jesukin." Which recalls the phrase of St. Teresa, oft-repeated in her poems and all of them, "todo es nada" — all is nothing, compared to this reality of the presence of God in the soul as its very "Spouse" and this is a reality. It is not merely the testimony of some great mystic such as Teresa of Avila or John of the Cross. It is a part of our faith. It is infallible truth. For our Divine Master has said, "If anyone love me, he will be loved of My Father and we will come to him and dwell in him."

I have said that St. Ita's little ode is "interesting for many reasons" — many besides those already mentioned. But to enumerate them might require more space than the Editor can allow in the Christmas issue. I don't know. So I will treat them on a separate paper which he can publish with this or defer to next week. (Editor's note — The concluding article will appear next week).

One more word to explain "Isacan" the title of the poem in the original Gaelic. In old Irish Ita was the word for Jesus. Isacan is the diminutive of endearment. Doctor Sigerson, whose translation I have used, has made an English diminutive to express the idea.

Fr. Antliff Dies

NORTH BERGEN, N. J. — The Rev. Joseph A. Antliff, Pastor of St. Regis Church here, died Dec 11 at the rectory at the age of 76. Father Antliff was born in England and was a priest 42 years.

Columnist Speaks



Walter Lippman, author and newspaper columnist, who will speak on "Man's Image of Man," at the 17th annual meeting of the American Catholic Philosophical Association to be held at Philadelphia, December 29 and 30. Monsignor Fulton Sheen of the Catholic University of America will give the presidential address, speaking on "Man, the Image of God." (Bachrach photo. (N.C.W.C.))

Getting On In The World

Irreverence is almost a universal vice among young men. A deplorable lack of reverence is shown for superiors and for sacred things for parents and for the aged, for womanhood for religion and for law and order. Perhaps of nothing else are young men so universally guilty. The coarse remark, the unkind ridicule and the cruel whisper is seldom suppressed or even rebuked. They find it so easy to sneer that they take to it naturally. Milton says: "A beardless cynic is the shame of nature" yet they can be found everywhere. Young men are more given to idle gossip, to defamation and to scandal than any other class.

Says a recent writer: "Women are rapidly going out of the gossiping business and men are taking their places."

This assertion is too true. Young men are the most heartless gossipers in the world and by none is calumny prated with such merciless injustice.

They originate more blighting and ruinous defamations of virtue and character, and feed the flames of scandal with more indifference and rancor, than all others combined. Filial affection and honor toward parenthood and devout and manly reverence for religion and holy things are virtues sadly too rare. The tender and humane, the merciful and reverential in man are greatly in need of cultivation.

According To The Doctor

Surgery for "appearance sake" has accomplished much to relieve mental suffering of people who would otherwise go through life with outstanding disfigurements.

Any deformity or blemish, however slight, which constitutes a source of distress to the patient should be corrected whenever possible, for a slight facial disfigurement often produces a psychological effect which is out of all proportion to the size of the deformity.

Before submitting to paraffin injections for the correction of nasal deformities, electric treatment for removal of superfluous hair, acid or electric treatments for the removal of black moles, one should first consult his family physician for a reference to one capable of doing the work required.

Children's deformities ought to be corrected in infancy, if possible, before they become sensitive about their conditions.

Everyone is entitled to "Life, Liberty" and the "Pursuit of Happiness" but many persons who feel themselves conspicuous because of some deformity can never live happy normal lives unless the deformity is corrected.

Red, Red, Christmas Red!

Brighten your little cherubs with the cheeriest of Christmas reds! It's the color they prefer—it's the color wise Santas choose!

- Corduroy overalls for the noise-maker of the family. Sizes 2 to 6 (below left).
- Short-sleeved striped cotton shirt. Sizes 3 to 6x 1.25
- Red and white polka dot cotton dress (3 to 6x) Whirling wide skirt (right) 2.00



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