

Rev. Dr. Owen B. McGuire Some Reflections On Marriage and Death and St. Patrick's Day

Does a man or woman who has no occupation need a vacation? The question would seem to imply a paradox, for by a vacation we usually mean a release from work. So if you are not working, why a vacation? Or, in the case, what would be meant by a vacation?

I will not say that such a man needs a vacation, but I do say that a vacation is good for him, too. It implies for him a change of atmosphere, of scenery, companionship and food, and he returns with the idea that it is well to be doing something, as he has seen others doing in his peregrinations.

The question has occurred to me because I have just had a vacation from doing nothing. I went down to New York to attend a wedding, thinking it would need only three days. But when the nuptial feast was over, I went out to Long Island to visit an old friend whose guest I was for some days last summer and who was a school-mate of mine in Ireland over sixty years ago.

When I entered the home, I was shocked to find there her five sons and two daughters, from various parts of greater New York, waiting for their mother's death. The doctor had said it would have to come before morning; but she lived for several days. So I waited for the death and funeral. Though speechless she recognized me and kissed the crucifix which I presented to her. It was a consolation to be able to give absolution in articulo mortis to Agnes MacArdle, the most beautiful child in the little country school which we attended so many years ago. She was four or five years younger than I; but at that age four or five years makes a great difference among children.

FAITH GIVES KEY

So it goes in this world, "a time for rejoicing and a time for weeping," as the inspired writer tells us. Births, nuptial feasts, and death follow in rapid succession, at times in the same family. Only our Catholic faith gives us the key to this mystery of our existence. Let us thank God for it. It was a touching sight to see her seven children all practicing Catholics kneeling around their mother's death-bed as I said the prayers for the dying and gave her absolution all convinced that she was going to a happier world to which she had showed them the way. Let us thank God for our Catholic faith.

This reminiscence of Ireland reminds me that next week we have St. Patrick's Day.

When I was a student at the American College in Rome, we had there a very lively, amiable, and companionable young man from New Jersey. He died many years ago; and was already referred to as an old man, which reminds me that it is time for me also to be dead. At the college he was just "Stafford," John Stafford. Before his death he had become Monsignor Stafford and President of Seton Hall College, one of Bishop McQuaid's many foundations in Jersey and in the diocese of Rochester.

Stafford, the student, had a large repertoire of humorous songs from which he used to entertain us on our little college festivals. The opening stanzas of one of them has stuck in my memory, although it is some forty years since I heard it last. It ran:

"When Ireland was founded by the Mac's and the O's
Is a question of history that nobody knows;
Some people say they came over from Spain
To visit Ould Granias and then did remain."

Personally I do not believe "they came over from Spain"; and the reader will, no doubt, agree with me when I say I do not believe they came from Japan. It is now fairly certain that in pre-historic times—in times, namely, of which there is no written record—there was a population, or rather an ensemble of populations, which extended across central Europe and spoke a Celtic language. The center of this population had been what is now Austria (in Hitlerian nomenclature, Ostmark), Bavaria and some of the Swiss cantons. Gradually they pushed westward, driven by a spirit of adventure, or more probably by the force of Germanic tribes entering from the North and East, until some of them reached the coast of Gaul and thence made their way to Ireland. From which it would follow that the Mac's and the O's who founded Ireland were cousins of the Scharszgrubers of Austria, the Zeisers of Bavaria, the Gfells of the Black Forest and the Schmidts of the Swiss Cantons.

FIXED IDEAS

Of course those Celts of Central Europe did not all trek westward to the coast and across the seas to the islands. The vast majority of them remained there, in time coalesced with the German tribes and spoke a German language. In other words became a German people. This idea that those peoples of Southern and Western Germany are in racial origin and character distinct from those of the North and Eastern provinces is nothing new or fantastical. It was a fixed idea of the late Dr. Austin O'Malley, brother of the famous journalist, Frank Ward O'Malley who wrote much to sustain his thesis that the Southern Germans are of Celtic origin.

For myself, I spent five years among them, roaming around those provinces in the long summer vacations, as well as mixing with them at the University during the scholastic year. Whoever has that experience must be struck by the difference he finds between them and Germans of the North and East, difference in character, in outward appearance, the shape of the head, the color of skin, hair and eyes. That, of course, does not prove that they are not Germans. They are. They are the result of an amalgam in which the characteristics of the original inhabitants predominate.

It has never happened in history

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'Quiz' Corner

What is the meaning of the science of astrology and is it wrong? By astrology we mean knowledge of the stars. There is a real science of the stars, called astronomy, which treats of their motions, sizes, distances and physical constitution. There is also a false science, called astrology, which investigates the aspects of the planets, their relative positions and their imagined influence upon the destinies of men. It is nothing more than divination of the stars. Divination has always been condemned, and the faithful warned against divination in the Old Law and in the New. Read the words of God's judgment upon Babylon in Isaiah. The Fathers of the Church, from the earliest centuries, denounced it. The progress of science in our days has completely discredited judicial astrology.

If God knows our needs, why is it necessary for us to pray to Him? Prayer isn't intended to inform God of what we need. We pray in order to fulfill a condition which God laid down for our own sakes. "Ask, and ye shall receive." God demands humility of us, a humility that acknowledges that we are dependent on Him. He also expects confidence of us, a confidence which acknowledges Him as our

Father. Parents, who know the needs of their children and intend to supply them insist that they ask respectfully for what they need.

Since there was no occasion for sin in Heaven, how were the angels tempted?

The manner or kind of temptation has not been revealed. We know that the angels were put on trial. We do not know what this trial was, but we do know from the revealed word of God that many of them rebelled against God and were cast out of Heaven.

After they had withstood the trial, the faithful angels were admitted to the full vision of God and since then have been so confirmed in grace that every reasonable desire is gratified and there is no possibility of sin.

Is it sinful for a Catholic to be a witness at a civil marriage?

If the marriage is between two Catholics or a Catholic and a non-Catholic the witness would sin by cooperating in helping someone to violate the marriage laws of the Church. On the other hand, if both parties were non-Catholic, and no scandal was given, such action would not be sinful because it could not be regarded as participation in a religious function.

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