

Father O'Connor

Following is the text of the eulogy preached by Monsignor John J. Barry at the funeral of Rev. Thomas M. O'Connor Sept. 11 in St. Alphonsus Church, Auburn. Father O'Connor died Sept. 4, 1937.

"He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you." (John 20, 21)

On the ninth of June, fifty-seven years ago, Father O'Connor was ordained to the Holy Priesthood in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Rochester, by the Most Reverend Bernard J. McQuaid, the first bishop of the Diocese of Rochester. It was a blessed and wonderful day in the life of Father O'Connor—that day in June, 1880. It was a day to which he had looked forward for many a year.

On that memorable day the bishop, the ordaining prelate, was there, and the students of St. Bernard's Seminary were present, and many priests of the city and diocese were there, and the relatives and friends of the ordination class, and the Holy Ghost was present. Yes, it was another Pentecost when the heavens were opened, and through the imposition of hands the Holy Spirit came, not in visible form, but nonetheless. He came and took up his abode in a special manner in the souls of the new priests.

When Bishop McQuaid imposed hands on Thomas O'Connor, he became another Christ, a Christ of the Most High. At that moment the Holy Spirit of God imparted to him the power of the priesthood.

A little later in the ordination ceremony the bishop gave to the young man the chalice and paten, and said to him, "Receive the power to offer sacrifices to God, and to cleanse from sin both for the living and the dead, in the name of the Lord." And then near the end of the Mass the bishop laid both hands on the head of the newly ordained priest and said to him, "Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins thou shalt forgive, they are forgiven thee, and whose sins thou shalt retain, they are retained."

On the evening of the Resurrection Jesus said to the apostles, "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." In other words, the mission of the apostles was the same as that of Our Divine Lord. And the mission of that of the apostles: to teach whatsoever Christ has commanded, to offer sacrifice to God, to forgive sins in a name which shall be bound on earth, and shall be bound in heaven.

After Father O'Connor had served as assistant for some time in Corpus Christi Church in Rochester and in a few other assignments in or near the same city, he was sent by his bishop to be the pastor of Moravia, and the rest of his priestly ministry was destined to be in the County of Cayuga.

FATHER O'CONNOR brought to his priesthood many gifts which he used to advantage in reaching the hearts and souls of men.

He had a rich mind, a great wealth of information, and a wide interest in the affairs of men. He could converse with equal ease and interest with the lawyer, the doctor, the teacher, the laborer, the priest or the peasant. He seemed to have a sympathetic understanding of the problems of people.

He could say with the Latin poet, "Whatever is human is not foreign to my interests."

While Father O'Connor en-

to be then faithful pastor and the good shepherd of his flock, feeding them with the Word of God, and the Bread of Life, and the Joy that comes with the Christian Faith.

But long before Father O'Connor's active ministry was over, pain and suffering became his portion. The afflictions of Holy Job fell upon him, and perhaps one of the most bitter was blindness.

For nearly twenty years he lived in continual darkness, and I suppose that no one can appreciate such an affliction better than when, in some instance, he experienced it.

IN ORDER to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice he memorized the Mass, word by word, from beginning to end. His retentive memory stood him in good stead in his crisis.

Why does God permit so much suffering? one might reverently ask, "and especially in those who endeavor to serve Him?" Without the light of faith suffering remains a great mystery, but with the light of the Gospel we can see at least in part. St. Paul says, "Fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, if any flesh for His (Mystical) Body which is the Church." (Col. 1, 24) "Strictly speaking, there is nothing wanting of the sufferings of Christ for the salvation of men, for His redemption was most copious. However, since it behooveth Christ to suffer and so to enter into His glory, it is indeed fitting that we, the members of His Mystical Body, should share in His sufferings as we

hope one day to share in His Glory.

SUFFERING in itself has no merit, any more than good works by themselves have any merit. But when our suffering is united by faith and love to Our Lord and we consent to carry our cross, then our suffering takes on new merit, being united with the Passion of Christ in the work of redemption. A person who offers his suffering in union with Our Lord as Christ on the Cross offered His to His Father, often does more good for souls than those who are engaged in the active apostolate.

Father O'Connor's blindness may have been instrumental in bringing the light of faith to many a soul sitting in the shadow of death. His pain may have delivered many souls from the pains of Purgatory and saved others from the fires of Hell. His spiritual anguish may have wrought from the great Heart of Christ the grace of conversion for many a poor sinner. Like St. Paul, Father O'Connor may have filled up those things wanting of the sufferings of Christ.

NO DOUBT Father O'Connor received many consolations in his afflictions as Christ did after His agony in Gethsemani. Our Saviour experienced sorrow and grief and desolation. He was "despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity." (Is. 53, 3) "In Gethsemani He prayed, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me (Matt. 26, 39)', and in His depth of desolation of the Cross He exclaimed, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou

forsaken me? (Matt. 27, 46)'

Our Lord, therefore, can have compassion on those who suffer. Our great High Priest has gone before us bearing His Cross, and He beckons us on, "Come, follow me." What comfort and strength Father O'Connor must have found in the thought that, "we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin." (Heb. 5, 15)

Without a sacrifice there is no reward. Without a battle there is no victory. Without Good Friday there is no Easter Sunday. For a Christian suffering has a meaning and purpose: First the Cross and then the Crown.

For St. Paul suffering meant the gateway to eternal life. "I reckon," he said, "that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. 8, 18)

MAY I PAUSE to pay tribute to those who gave to Father O'Connor such kind and loving care during his long illness. If I may be so bold, I would thank in the name of God, first of all, his own sister who cared for him during many years, and then the Sisters and nurses of St. Joseph's Hospital, Elmira, who watched over him during the trying and declining years of his life.

May the God of all consolation reward and bless them all in this life and in eternity.

We pray that the soul of Father O'Connor is with the Blessed in heaven where "they shall no more hunger nor

Fr. O'Connor Funeral Held

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of the Divine Word Mission House.

He cared for the parishes of Cato and Red Creek until 1913 when he was transferred to Ludlowville with missions at Northville and Kings Ferry. After ten years there, he was named pastor of St. Anthony's Church, Gorton, the post he held until 1931 when he resigned due to failing health.

Priests of the Diocese chanted office of the dead in St. Alphonsus Church, Auburn, Tuesday evening and the funeral Mass Wednesday at 10:30 a. m.

Father O'Connor is survived by his brother, Joseph L. O'Connor of Port Byron; four sisters, Mrs. Katherine Flanagan of Auburn, Miss Margaret O'Connor and Mrs. Mary O'Connell of Rochester, and Mrs. Richard Harmon of Weedsport.

Burial was in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery where students of St.

Bernard's Seminary served as bearers to the grave.

PRIESTS ATTENDING Father O'Connor's funeral were: Rev. George Jones who served as master of ceremonies, and Rev. Raymond Wahl, assistant master.

Very Rev. Msgr. Donald M. Cleary attended in the sanctuary.

Also present were the Reverend Fathers John Guy, Edward J. Waters, Elmer McNamara, William Reed, Philip McGhan, Ralph Meyer, Edward Kurdziel, O.F.M. Conv.

Fathers Frederick Walz, William Tobin, Robert Kress, William O'Brien, James Lane, William Davie, John Norris, John Kleintjes, Paul Cuddy, Robert Meng, William Thomas.

Fathers Joseph Gaynor, William Hayes, Raymond Nolan, Arthur Hack, Gerard Gull, Henry Adamski, Frederick Eisemann and Robert Kreckel.

You Can Be Sure If The Door Is Open


Mie Ken, Japan—If the door is open and you can walk right in, you can be sure it's a Catholic Church.

The small Maryknoll Mission here had two distinguished visitors recently, the Italian Ambassador to Japan and his wife.

The couple had been on a sight-seeing tour of the city and had dropped into the church for a visit.

"We were wondering, from a distance, if this was a Catholic Church," explained the Ambassador to the pastor, Father Joseph J. Mooney, M.M., of Arlington, Mass., "but when we saw the door open, we knew it was!"

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