



Bishop of Rochester celebrates Holy Mass for St. John Fisher students in college chapel.

## The Founder Of St. John Fisher College

Bishop Kearney's determined role in establishing St. John Fisher College

fulfills longtime dream of Diocese — an institution for the higher education of young men

By VERY REVEREND JOHN FRANCIS MURPHY, C.S.B., President of St. John Fisher College

**T**HIS MEMORABLE year of Bishop Kearney's Silver Jubilee furnishes a fitting vantage point to view the Bishop's role in establishing St. John Fisher College. Perhaps we can pluck from the blossoms of memory a bouquet of tribute to our founder, our chancellor and finest friend.

It is regrettable that this tribute could not be penned by our late Registrar Miss Cathryn Zeldi Lyons. Her brilliant career enveloped the whole history of the college, her devoted dedication and her influence will be lasting. On her many visits to the college Bishop Kearney always paused in her office to say hello to one who had worked so faithfully for the college.

Here would have been the sensitive mind to cull from the past the incidents and events that would make this story live and recapture for His Excellency some of the threads that were interwoven by a gentle Providence to bring his dream of a Catholic College for men to reality.

**B**ISHOP KEARNEY talked of his men's college shortly after he arrived in the Rochester Diocese. Even the name was definite in his mind in the early 1940's.

Preliminary discussions were held with Father Edmund McCorkell, then our Basilian Superior General, but actual steps had to await the end of World War II which tragically had engulfed mankind. The campaign for funds, under Monsignor John Randall, was a notable success. Maginnis and Walsh of Boston were retained as architects and construction began in 1950.

Mr. Maginnis told Bishop Kearney, "I will put on that hillside the loveliest building in this locality." On the day of the dedication, October 12, 1952, with the golden cross on the tower uplifted against an autumn sky, it became evident that Mr. Maginnis was right.

During the days of the college's construction and since, the Bishop has enthusiastically echoed Keats' line . . . "a thing of beauty is a joy forever."

Even before the college was opened the Bishop made a magnificent gift to us of the library of the late Father Joseph J. O'Connell of East Rochester. Since the library is the nucleus of a college, this gift enabled us to make unusual progress in a few short years.

The lives of the Pioneer students were memorable. The place was unfinished but our fervent wish to teach and study was not to learn is the essential spirit present.

Loss of the Rev. Excellence's said the Last Mass in the college. After the Mass a group of the students lit the sanctuary lamp. Later in his address to the students the Bishop pointed out the fact that this lamp would forever be the beacon to guide generations of students to the Presence of Jesus Christ, the source of all Truth and Wisdom.

In his every utterance to us, in the pioneer days and on many occasions since, His Excellency infallibly drew upon some aspect of our work to show its significance in forming the college's traditions. No one of the staff or student body ever heard him without a new inspiration and deepened sense of the significance of the life of learning.

The Bishop set May 20th, the day on which St. John Fisher was made a Cardinal, as the official patronal feast of the college. Each year on that date he has offered Mass for us and addressed us with incomparable eloquence and graciousness. At the start of each academic year as well as also at Christmas time he has said Mass for us and in a most wonderful spirit of forthright fatherly interest shared with us some new facet of the spiritual treasures that are Christ's . . . and his.

**T**HREE YEARS AGO when we added the cafeteria auditorium wing to the college, we decided to name the auditorium The Rosina O'Doherty Kearney Auditorium in memory of the Bishop's mother. Following Mass the Bishop recalled his first and greatest teacher — his mother. He told us that her last bit of advice when he was going to take his first

assignment after his ordination was this "Be good to the poor and keep your mouth shut."

Last May, we were able to supply a long-felt deficiency here at the college in obtaining an oil-painting of our founder. The penetrating genius of Mr. John Menihan and the generous cooperation of the executors of the estate of the late Mrs. Jeremiah Hickey made possible the exquisite portrait that hangs in the Rosina O'Doherty Kearney Auditorium.

The unveiling and dedication took place on our patronal feast-day, with staff students our Board of Advisory Regents and their wives present with a few guests.

The natural charm and delight of such an occasion were marvellously enhanced by the obvious restoration of Bishop Kearney's health. For months dark clouds of uncertainty had filled the lives of us all; clouds that were penetrated by a torrent of prayer on the Bishop's behalf. To see him again with his accustomed spirit and vigor brought prayers of gratitude to every heart . . . and a tear to many an eye.

Any lingering doubts about the event being a sombre funeral rite were rapidly dispelled by the wit and humor of the Bishop's speech.

Mr. Jeremiah Hickey, Sr. paid a magnificent tribute to Bishop Kearney citing the vision, enthusiasm and success that have marked his administration of this Diocese.

**G**RADUATION WEEK has always been a happy time for us especially since our Chancellor has entered so enthusiastically into all the events. His addresses to the graduates have always been masterpieces of wisdom and eloquence.

His philosophy of education might be summarized in his belief that young hearts should be the shrines of God, young bodies should be the temples of God, young minds should be the mirrors of God, and young souls should be the abode of God. The good things the young men have received are to be shared with others not locked in smug isolation in a selfish heart.

Graduation from St. John Fisher College with Bishop Kearney presiding has had a true note of dedication to it. We adopted the formula used in the days of Faith in the Catholic Universities of Europe. The graduate kneels before the Bishop who holds his clasped hands and says "Admitte me ad gradum. In nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen." (I admit you to the degree, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.) It is meant to be a ceremony of commencement in the art of living. Bishop Kearney has given it a symbolism that echoes the Crusades.

**E**ACH YEAR THE Bishop has presided at the Chancellor's Dinner for the staff, their wives and our Board of Advisory Regents and their wives. His words of encouragement and commendation to our Board have been vitally significant in welding them into the powerful, helpful group they have become.

At this year's dinner, his Excellency showered the warmest congratulations on the whole Fisher family for our good fortune in receiving the full approval of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Universities. He thanked us all for helping him to make one of his fondest dreams come true.

The history of St. John Fisher College is a brief one, but today a college must leap at once into comparison with accepted standards. Mere youthfulness is no substitute for competence. What has been accomplished here derives its success in overflowing measure from the interest, the encouragement, the inspiration and the great-hearted generosity of Bishop Kearney. May a generous God fill these days of jubilee with richest blessings for him. In quiet hours of musing on his stewardship, may he find consolation in the realization that generations of students yet unborn will share in the treasures of our Catholic, humane, culture because he established St. John Fisher College.

The spiritual refinement of their lives will remain his lasting tribute. May Fishermen ever be worthy sons of our Founder.