

## The Bishop Of Rochester

(Continued from page 28)

routine for the Bishop of Rochester. Although he rarely writes a speech or sermon, this does not mean that he talks impromptu or without preparation. Only the preparation of prayerful meditation can explain the Bishop's firm grasp and clear presentation of any subject which he discusses.

His addresses give evidence, too, of an earlier preparation. This goes back to his days of youthful study, when he stored up in his memory a knowledge of Scripture, the stories of literature and the imagery of the poets (Shakespeare, Lowell, Wordsworth), all of which now arise to his lips spontaneously and serve to enhance his thoughts.

Perhaps the secret of Bishop Kearney's success as a speaker is found in the counsel of the eloquent apostle of the Sacred Heart, Blessed Father Claude de la Colombiere: "It is only by meditation that one can get at the heart of things and know the strength and weakness of opinions." When Bishop Kearney appears in the pulpit or on the speaker's dais, he always "gets at the heart of things," as his people and fellow citizens well know. Once he has organized his ideas through meditation, he has no worry about the words. His gift of fluency never fails to animate the ideas conceived in his mind and heart.

Every time he raises his voice to spread the fire which Christ so much wishes enkindled, the Bishop of Rochester is mindful of Mother Seton's admonition: "The priest holds the honor of God on his lips."

The Catholic pulpit, he has said, "will never be a bogged or intolerant pulpit. It will be dedicated, as the Church of Christ must be, to the hope of the union of all Christians who profess faith in His Divinity. But that union can never be bought at the price of truth."

In his public speaking, the Bishop avoids polemics and controversy, but when the Church or the rights of the faithful are attacked, he never hesitates to enter the lists. During his years in Rochester, some have observed, Bishop Kearney "has never compromised or avoided controversy when it was his duty to speak out, but in speaking out he has never offended or created any enmity." On the contrary, the same observers note, the Bishop's forthrightness, even in delicate issues of controversy, have only increased his prestige and respect in the community.

**ATTACKS ON THE** patriotism of American Catholics or Catholic schools always stir the justifiable anger of the Bishop of Rochester. In the face of such attacks, he never delays raising his voice in prompt and crushing reiteration. He was one of the first bishops to challenge the charge, raised shortly after World War II, that Catholic schools were a divisive and unpatriotic factor on the American scene.

The Bishop could never forget those thousands of young American Catholics who had served so readily in the armed forces of our country, many of them former altar boys whom he had known, many of them graduates upon whom he had conferred diplomas. Mindful of these brave young men, he pointed to the battlefields of Europe and warned:

"Nobody questioned the patriotism of our Catholic school graduates on the beaches of Anzio or Normandy, and by the Eternal God they won't do it now!"

When post-war exposures of communists in the ranks of education and government outraged his patriotic sense, he scored another point. "Among the names mentioned," he said, "I don't find any names from Fordham, Notre Dame, or other Catholic colleges."

Again last June, speaking at Le Moyne College commencement exercises in Syracuse, when he received a doctorate of letters degree, he made a clear-cut reply to the more recent charge which says that Catholic



Communion Breakfast with Armed Forces Nurses

schools limit academic freedom."

"We do limit academic freedom," he frankly stated. "We limit it to the extent that truth limits it, but with truth there is always freedom, because Christ has told us, 'You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'"

Highlighting most of the Bishop's talks is his own very personable and contagious spirit of humor, which his audiences have learned to enjoy so much. Typical of this is the apology which he made to the 1957 graduates of Le Moyne College when he received his honorary doctorate. Noting how easily he had acquired his degree in comparison to the young graduates who were forced to undergo years of study and examination in order to earn their degrees, the Bishop said:

"I feel somewhat like the gentleman standing on the corner in the Gospel, who was called into work in the vineyard at the last minute, and it was found that he acquired just as much in emolument for his work as those who had been working all through the day."

"And I am sure," he said, "that you who have borne the burden and the heat of the day, are tempted to say, 'How is it that this superior degree can go to one who comes in at the eleventh hour?'"

"Well," the Bishop concluded, "I wouldn't make an issue out of it for this reason, that you may get the answer that was given to the gentleman in the Gospel, 'Take what is thine and go thy way.'"

Banquet chairmen always breathe easier when the Bishop is present. They know that his intellectual clarity, eloquence and good humor have saved many a gathering from the stigma of boredom.

**A WHOLE GENERATION** has come of age since Bishop Kearney first came to the Diocese of Rochester. It was twenty years ago in the early evening of November 10, 1937, that he first entered his See City of Rochester to take over as Chief Shepherd of a flock then numbering 230,000 souls. He came from the far western state of Utah, where he had served for five years as Bishop of the Diocese of Salt Lake.

Greeting him on his arrival in Rochester's New York Central Station were church and civic officials and a cheering throng of 12,000 people. The crowd took the new Bishop to its heart immediately. It liked his tall and vigorous appearance. It liked his friendly and ready smile.

He listened appreciatively to the official welcome expressed by the Rt. Rev. Monsignor William M. Hart, administrator of the Diocese. Said Monsignor Hart:

"You come to be a leader of the religious and civic life of the community. You come to direct the forces of religion that mean so much to our commonwealth. You come to build more stately mansions on the foundations so firmly laid by early men of God in this region."

Mayor Charles Stanton also had a word of greeting and welcome for the new Bishop. "In Rochester," he

said, "the Catholic Bishop occupies a high place in the respect and esteem of the people. His work is directed not only to the religious and material betterment of Catholics, but to all people regardless of race or creed."

To these messages of official welcome, Bishop Kearney responded:

"As James E. Kearney my arrival would mean little. I have come in the name of God, and the only reason you have assembled here tonight is to pay tribute to me as a representative of religion."

Lauding the "tremendous welcome" accorded him as an expression of the faith of the people of the Diocese, Bishop Kearney concluded: "I hope my administration will prove worthy of the reception you have given me."

On Armistice Day, November 11, 1937, following his impressive welcome at the station, Bishop Kearney was formally and solemnly installed as fifth Bishop of Rochester amid brilliant ceremonies conducted at the Pro-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

The assemblage, one of the greatest in the religious history of the Diocese, included four Archbishops, twenty-six Bishops, scores of priests and religious representatives of the various Sisterhoods. Present from the Far West were Archbishop John J. Mitty of San Francisco, Bishop Kearney's predecessor in the See of Salt Lake, and also the late Archbishop John J. Cantwell of Los Angeles.

A unique feature was the presence of two of Bishop Kearney's predecessors in the See of Rochester. These were Archbishop Edward Mooney of Detroit, fourth Bishop of Rochester and Bishop Kearney's immediate predecessor; and Archbishop Thomas F. Hickey, Archbishop of Viminacium and second Bishop of Rochester.

Representing the civic and professional ranks of society were numerous heads of distinguished lay personages headed by Governor Herbert H. Lehman and Mayor Stanton.

Bishop Kearney was conducted to his throne in the Cathedral sanctuary by his friend, the Most Reverend Stephen J. Donahue, Auxiliary Bishop of New York and the representative of His Eminence Patrick Cardinal Hayes, Archbishop of New York.

In a formal welcome Monsignor Hart pledged Bishop Kearney the obedience and loyalty of all the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Rochester.

**SPEAKING IN** the name of Cardinal Hayes, Bishop Donahue also welcomed Bishop Kearney and assured him:

"You come today as the chief Shepherd of this Diocese, to preside over a splendid body of clergy and religious whose loyalty for their Bishops has been outstanding in the annals of Catholic New York. You will lead a devoted and united laity who are conspicuous for their strong Catholic Faith and for their love of the Church."

In response Bishop Kearney ex-

plained that Catholic Bishops are the successors of the Apostles who were divinely appointed by Christ to preach the Gospel and rule the Church. In conclusion he told his new flock, "the appreciation which my lips are eager to express at this time for all of you I must withhold for a more hallowed moment. At my first Mass in the See of Rochester I shall speak to the Sacred Heart of my Master for all of you."

**BISHOP KEARNEY** was born 73 years ago this month, on October 28, 1884, at Red Oak, Iowa, the son of William Patrick Kearney and Rosina O'Doherty Kearney, both natives of Ireland. At two years of age he moved with his parents to New York City.

The Bishop's parents both died in the early twenties. Still living in New York are his two brothers: William, an attorney, and Leo who recently retired as assistant superintendent of New York Public Schools. Leo's son Donald, whose career the Bishop has followed with great interest, is currently a vice-president of the American Broadcasting Corporation. In honor of his Bishop-uncle, nephew Donald has named one of his two young sons James Edward.

The future Bishop of Rochester received his early education in New York public schools. His boyhood playground, he recalls, was the old Grand Central Station on the site of the present terminal and the adjoining neighborhood. The Bishop served as an altar boy at St. Agnes Church at 43rd Street and Lexington Avenue. At this time, his brother Leo likes to recall, he was Bishop Kearney's Bishop. "I was in charge," he explains, "of fifty altar boys in our parish church and James was one of them."

"I had the idea while I was serving on the altar," Bishop Kearney says, "that I wanted to be a priest." While his ambitions for the priesthood were never completely diverted he decided first to make a try at teaching, a job which also held a strong attraction for him. He enrolled, therefore, in Teachers College where he attended from 1901 to 1903 and obtained a teachers license from the city of New York. In February 1903 he took a teaching post at the Public School 25, in East Fifth Street, the heart of an old Jewish neighborhood.

As interesting as he found public school teaching, the old urge to serve in the priesthood became stronger in young James Kearney. Therefore, after six months in his public school teaching post, he resigned to enroll in St. Joseph's Seminary, the archdiocesan institution at Dunwoodie near Yonkers. At Dunwoodie the future Bishop came under the influence of a brilliant teacher. This was the famous Father Francis Duffy, World War I Chaplain of "New York's Fighting Sixty-Ninth."

"The priests who were ordained when I was, a matter of almost a half century ago," says Bishop Kearney, "looked upon Father Duffy as the finest teacher we had ever known. He was a profound scholar and a distinguished teacher of phil-

(Continued on page 31)