

Father Of Four

Orthodox Priest Tells Why He 'Came Home'

(Following is an interview by Kathleen Kolberg, published in the Detroit "Michigan Catholic" by the "Courier-Journal" in its June 22 issue.)

A CATHOLIC priest who is married? Byzantine Rite? Catholic priest who has been validly ordained by an Orthodox bishop?

These and related questions emerged in the minds of many Catholics by people recently.

They were touched off by the ceremony June 14 in which Fr. Peter Moga, a Rumanian Orthodox priest, married and the father of four, was accepted into the Roman Catholic Church as a validly ordained priest.

An unasked question, really, a conjecture, linked Fr. Moga's "return" with a future papal visit. Pope John XXIII's proposed ecumenical council, a major topic of the historical council is to be a return to unity of separated Christians.

Back to the questions that year, the Eastern (also known as the Byzantine or Oriental) section of the Catholic Church "broke" with the "Greek schism" as a rupture has been called. It wrenched from Rome a much-esteemed branch of the Church, a branch that had produced such notable names as Basil the Great (329-379) and John Chrysostom (347-407).

In Constantinople, then headquarters for the Eastern Church, the "switch" from Orthodox to Catholic is not nearly as radical as one might believe. Fr. Moga contends: "The Orthodox have the same sacraments. They preach the same things. There is really only one drastic difference and that is that the Orthodox reject the Pope as Vicar of Christ on earth."

"There are several smaller differences," he observed. "The Orthodox preach the doctrine of purgatory, that is, they pray for the soul of the deceased in the Holy Liturgy (Mass) but do not use the word 'purgatory.'"

Another difference is that the bread used for Holy Communion in the Orthodox Church is unleavened. Bread used for the Eucharist in the Catholic Church can either be leavened or unleavened.

Perhaps the most knotty of the problems encountered by Fr. Moga after he petitioned Cardinal Mooney for entrance into the Catholic Church during Easter Week, 1956, was this one: Was he a validly ordained priest?

Earlier Fr. George Pop, pastor of St. John the Baptist's Church (Catholic Rumanian Byzantine Rite) had presented his endorsement and recommendations together with Fr. Moga's credentials to the Chancery. Auxiliary Bishop John A. Donovan then was delegated to review this case.

From there, it was referred to Rome and Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, of the Sacred Congregation of the Oriental Church.

"It became a question," Fr. Moga stated, "of whether the bishop who had ordained me, a Rumanian Bishop Polycarp Morussa, had been validly ordained and consecrated."

After investigation the Holy Office, then under Pope Pius XII, returned to Fr. Moga the decision that Fr. Moga's was a "valid and canonical priesthood."

The reasons why, Fr. Moga explained, are pretty much contained in the idea of "apostolic succession."

Thus, Bishop Polycarp's ordination of Fr. Moga was valid because Bishop Polycarp had succeeded in the line that originally began with St. Peter.

Discussing his marriage, Fr. Moga pointed out that "from the beginning, it has been the custom of the Byzantine (Eastern or Oriental) church that a prospective priest may marry before his ordination. However, he may marry only once."

"According to tradition, if his wife dies, he may not marry. I think that now probably 95 per cent of all Oriental and Byzantine priests are married. This is only the priests, not the bishops. I was received into the Catholic Church under the law of the Byzantine Church."

"In the United States, and this law exists only in the United States," Fr. Moga added, "prospective Byzantine priests may not marry at all. No marriage is allowed after ordination in any Rite."

The recent advent of photographers, news men and magazine writers has transformed the Moga's colonial-style home on tree-lined Long Blvd., W. Dearborn, into a "virtual" Grand Central station, Fr. Moga says.

When the hubbub dies down, however, Father (now assisting Fr. Julius Aron, administrator of St. Mary's Church, Dearborn) expects his family's life to go on much as it did before December, 1958. Then, his wife, Valerie, and their four sons, all were received into the Catholic Church.

Fr. Moga's two youngest sons, Cornel, 10, and Michael, 8, will serve as altar boys when he offers Mass.

Actually, as Fr. Moga pointed out earlier, citing Pope John XXIII's statements on the proposed ecumenical council: "We are not being called to a strange house, but are returning home. Much like a child is called home to his mother and father."

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GIRLS' STAFF OF CAMP STELLA MARIS, Conesus Lake, is shown above as the summer camping season nears its end. First row (from left): Miss Marcia MacAdams, Director; Rev. Eugene H. McFarland, Executive Director; Miss Mary Burkett, Assistant Director; Row 2: Misses Barbara Kress, Craft Director; Rita Zaunegger, Athletic Director; Miss Margaret O'Shaughnessy, Waterfront Director; Misses Mary Kay Smead, Campfire Director; Joanne Kuchman, Dance Director; Row 3: Misses Kathleen Morrison, Carol Carson, Patricia Roney, Mary Ellen Donovan, Patricia Burgess, Ellen Finigan, Karen Gears, Ellen Robinson, Mary Ann Kinsky; Row 4: Misses Carol Odenbach, Kathleen Leap, Nancy Plunkett, Mary Patricia Kane, Kathleen O'Brien, Kathleen McCusker, Gail Lawson, Patricia Marlon, Barbara McGrath. Cook boys are William Hohman, Thomas Blum, Christopher Odenbach and Justin Knaut. (Martin Wahl-Photo)

Mountain Climbing Missionaries Explore Native Family Customs

ALEXISHAFEN — (RNS) — Two river was forded 14 times in an afternoon. One whole day the priests were plagued by leeches. And about 350 feet from the top of Mount Wilhelm, the highest peak in the territory of Papua and New Guinea.

They are Father Bernard Johnson and Father Raphael M. Wiltgen, head of the Warak Mission and historian of the Alexishafen Vicariate, respectively.

THE EXPEDITION to the mountain top was started by Father Wiltgen who wanted to examine the route into a densely populated highlands discovered by pioneer Divine Word missionaries in 1923 and 1933.

He left on his estimated 220-mile trek from Alexishafen and at the Warak Mission he was joined by Father Johnson who organized the rest of the expedition.

The route led up and down steep mountains, through groves of twisted bamboo and moss-laden trees, across rotting logs and slippery rocks, sometimes through rain and mud. A twist-

ing river was forded 14 times in an afternoon. One whole day the priests were plagued by leeches. And about 350 feet from the top of Mount Wilhelm, the highest peak in the territory of Papua and New Guinea.

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Lawrence Doran

Requiem Held

Seneca Falls — Lawrence J. Doran, 70, husband of Mrs. Marie Mahoney Doran, superintendent of the Seneca Falls Hospital, died Tuesday, Aug. 4, 1959 in his home after a long illness.

He was a past Grand Knight of the Seneca Falls Council, Knights of Columbus and was a past faithful navigator of the Fourth Degree Assembly, Seneca Falls Knights of Columbus. He also belonged to the Chalice Club of the council and for several years was district Warden of the Knights of Columbus.

SURVIVING BESIDES — He has three daughters, Mrs. Sam Bulis, Seneca Falls; Mrs. Elizabeth Gable, Durkitt, at Mrs. Robert Harshbarger of Cincinnati, Ohio; two brothers, John R. and Peter Doran of Seneca Falls; two sisters, Miss Catherine F. Doran, Mrs. Howard Smith both of Seneca Falls and three grand children.

Funeral services were conducted at 8:30 am Friday morning at the home and 9:00 am in St. Patrick's Church, Rev. John P. O'Boine, pastor officiating at a Requiem Mass and burial was in St. Columbkille Cemetery.

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