

## Father Brennan

Following is the text of the sermon by Monsignor Patrick J. Flynn at the funeral Mass of Father Gerald Brennan, Jan. 23, 1962, in St. Bridget's Church, Rochester. Father Brennan died Saturday, Jan. 20.

"Every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in the things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifice for sins." Hebrews 5:1.

Our Divine Lord, on the eve of His death, gathered His first priests around Him in the Upper Room and gave to them and the world the Memorial that would keep Him remembered among men until the end of time.

All of us share a common instinct and desire to preserve the memory of our departed friends, to enshrine permanently the names of those to whom we are bound by the bonds of gratitude. So when our friends die we raise monuments over their tombs; in memory of our war heroes who gave their lives that we might live we raise in every town and hamlet memorials to recall their sacrifices for us.

But what of Christ who sacrificed a life more precious than all our lives, who loved us with an eternal love? All of us are indebted beyond redemption to the Christ who gave His life on a cross as the price of our eternal redemption. Surely it was most fitting that the memory of Christ be kept alive in the world. More than anyone else Christ had a right not to be forgotten.

Fortunately, our Divine Lord did not leave the preservation of His memory to us. On that last night of His life in the Upper Room, Christ Himself gave us His own memorial; He established an unique means of keeping His Name and Love alive in the hearts of men forever. And the Memorial of Himself which Christ gave us was not a memorial of mute marble or cold stone such as we would erect in our feeble but sincere attempt to remember those we love.

The memorial of Himself that Christ gave us on the eve of His death was a living memorial. He gave us Himself. Because He was God as well as man He could do this. And the living memorial which Christ gave us recalled not any moment of His life (and they were all important), but the supreme moment of His life when He offered His life on the altar of the cross for all men.

We all know the details of

how Christ gave us Himself as a living memorial of His love. Sitting with His Apostles, He took bread, and blessed, and broke and gave to them, saying: "Take ye and eat. This is my body!"

"And taking the chalice of wine, He gave thanks, and gave to His Apostles, saying: 'This is my blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins.'"

Thus it was that Christ before His death on the Cross gave Himself as a living memorial. And by the separate consecration of bread into His Body and of wine into His Blood, He mystically signified His physical death on the cross where He was slain in a bloody manner, where His Blood was drained from His Body.

It is very clear, too, that Christ deliberately intended this sacred action of His last night on earth should be His memorial. This we know from His solemn command to His first priests. "Do this," He told them, "in commemoration of Me!"—"Do what I have done—change bread and wine into my Body and Blood—in memory of what I will do for you."

It is over 1,900 years since Christ gave us this memorial of His love, but where today, we ask, do we find His command carried out? Where today do we find Christ's solemn command faithfully obeyed?

We have the answer to this question dramatized for us in a very personal way in the priestly life of the good priest whom we mourn this morning.

Father Gerald Thomas Brennan dedicated his life to fulfilling Christ's command—"Do this in memory of Me!" Each morning of his priestly life for over 38 years girded in the sacred vestments, he approached the altar of his parish church. On this altar of St. Bridget's, you could see him morning after morning, offer in blessing the simple elements of bread and wine. And at a solemn moment, he bowed over the white host held in his fingers and repeated the words Christ commanded: "This is my Body!"

And then taking a chalice of wine he blessed and repeated with Christ's authority: "This is my Blood!" Now there was no bread or wine, now on the al-

tar, as the eyes of Faith recognize, there was present the Body and Blood of Calvary's Victim. Now through the ministry of Father Brennan there was present the living Christ who was slain on the Cross.

Then you saw Father Brennan, after he had made his own adoration of the Living Christ, raise in turn above his head the Sacred Host and the Sacred Chalice. Once again Christ was remembered as he wanted to be remembered—the divine Victim of the Cross. Once again the death of Christ was renewed in an unbloody manner. Each time you saw Father Brennan raise the Host or the Chalice you saw what Mary saw on Calvary—Christ raised on an altar of sacrifice and in a world where hearts were divided for against him. Each time Father Brennan stood at this altar he broke the bread and drank the cup, as St. Paul says, "to show forth the death of the Lord."

This memorial of Christ is what we call the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Father Brennan was consecrated as a special minister of this sacrifice. Thirty-nine years ago, by divine call of God and his own acceptance of that call he was appointed for men in the things pertaining to God and empowered to offer sacrifice for sins, the Sacrifice of the Mass. This was the day of his ordination in Old St. Patrick's Cathedral across the river.

On that day he received all the priestly powers from the ordaining Bishop but the high point of that ordination rite came when he was given the power to celebrate Mass.

When he had received all the vestments, when the stole was crossed upon his breast, when the chasuble was placed upon his shoulders, when his hands were anointed with holy oil, then the Bishop gave him a chalice and paten and said to him: "Receive the power to offer sacrifice and to celebrate Mass for the living and the dead." From that moment, Father Brennan was a priest forever, bearing in his soul a spiritual power which his soul proudly carried away with it into eternity on last Saturday evening.

Father Brennan, of course, did more than say Mass. I am sure that the minds and hearts of you his friends are full to today of your own personal and fond memories of Father Brennan.

Many of you remember him as the parish priest who for almost forty years served devotedly as a shepherd of souls in two parishes of this old northeast district of Rochester—Our Lady of Mount Carmel for 14 years, and here at St. Bridget's for 26 years.

Others, perhaps, are thinking of Father Brennan, the patient confidant and counsellor of those troubled souls who came, sometimes from the shadows, seeking his advice. He understood human weakness, how easy it is for a man without God's grace to fall. Perhaps that is why the downfallen came so often to his door.

As a young priest his zeal to help the Italian speaking people of Mount Carmel Parish prompted him to master their native tongue so that he could talk with them and hear their confessions.

We recall his talents for business administration; how he steered both Mount Carmel and St. Bridget's through those desperate years of the Great Depression. Twenty-five years ago, with the nation still in the depression, he came here to St. Bridget's and with very meager means successfully restored this historic edifice from the ashes and ruin of a disastrous fire. This beautiful altar which you see is the creation of Father Brennan's personal planning and attention. He loved this altar and was rightfully proud of it.

Today we think too of Father Brennan as the inspiring speaker of Christian truth. He was a pioneer in this city of religious instruction for public school children. Long before the released-time program for religious instruction was written into the laws of this state, Father Brennan was working daily, morning and afternoon, teaching religion to public school children. So many times in later years, people would greet him on the street and when they had passed by, he would say: "That is a youngster whom I taught at 18 School or 14 School."

When Father Brennan spoke from the sanctuary of this parish church, he was always conscious that he held the honor of God upon his lips. He loved to preach from this sanctuary; and so two years ago when cancer struck his throat and it was necessary to remove his larynx or voice box, he cried not so much from pain or the ordeal of the operation, nor from the hard cross of being doomed to a world of muteness and silence. No he cried sincere tears because he knew that his tragic affliction spelled the end of his proud function as an eloquent exponent of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

More than once, after he lost his voice, he came into this church alone and secretly to practice talking with the little mechanical device he used. He so much wanted to preach again.

Of course Father Brennan is famous and will be remembered for a long time because of the many books which he wrote for children. These books are the fruit of his early efforts and determination to learn to talk to children about God in their own language, in a way they could understand.

His books for children were an outstanding success and brought a whole world of children to his feet to listen to him. Almost daily letters came from all parts of this country from children who read his stories and wanted him to write more. His pen enlarged his pulpit and influenced a whole generation of children who have now grown up, and who in turn read Father Brennan's stories to their children.

Many of you here today know Father Brennan as the priest, whose friendly personality won him a host of friends throughout this his native city. We saw this proven only last June when Bishop Kearney, city officials, Red Wing Baseball executives and Bausch and Lomb officers joined with a thousand of his parishioners and friends to pay tribute to Father Brennan at the Bausch and Lomb Auditorium.

Father Brennan was a long-time and popular figure at Red Wing Stadium; and so, some years ago the Red Wing officials made him the honorary chaplain of their team and invited him to all their Board of Directors' meetings. But while his title was a titular one, his role as baseball club chaplain was for him quite real and serious.

Over the years, many young ball players came to St. Bridget's Rectory, seeking help and advice from the jolly priest who sat behind homeplate. And always he helped these young men who later on when they moved up to the "big leagues" wrote him notes or came to visit him when passing through this city.

Father Brennan was a man

who kept his business very much to himself. Even his personal charities and benefactions were anonymous and unadvertized. Whether he was giving money to the needy, or buying a pair of shoes for a poor boy, or donating a tabernacle to a needy church—and he did all of these things—always his words were the same: "Never mind telling anybody about this!"

These are the fond memories of Father Brennan which are in the minds and hearts of his friends today. But his greatest memory is that he was and is a priest of Jesus Christ. And just as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the living memorial of Christ, so that Mass becomes the true and lasting memorial also of Father Brennan and all priests who have dedicated their lives to the service of the altar.

As long as the Mass is celebrated here on the Altar of St. Bridget's or anywhere else, as long as Christ is remembered in this church or any church, Father Brennan will also be remembered. The recording Angel can not write the story of Christ's love for the world without telling the story of the priesthood, without telling also the story of Father Brennan the priest.

Father Brennan was human and had his share of faults, as all of us have our share of faults. But we can be confident that this priest who so faithfully offered sacrifice for the pardon of others will find ready mercy from the Christ who sacrificed His life on a cross to win forgiveness for all of us. We can be confident that the cup of physical suffering which Father Brennan accepted with courage and resignation will be accepted as the price of his soul's peace by the Christ who once drank from the same cup of pain and suffering.

We pray that Father Brennan who worked so long in this shadow world of Faith, where some times we see lights of hope and at others find ourselves lost in a Calvary of darkness, may find himself standing today in the brilliant light of God's love. We pray that today the great High Priest will open His Sacred Heart and show Father Brennan the love He has prepared for His priests.

### Laity Rule School Board

Providence — (RNS) — In an action believed unique in the U.S. parochial school system, the Catholic Diocese of Providence has named a diocesan school board that is made up largely of laymen.

The new board, as announced by Msgr. Arthur T. Geoghegan, superintendent of schools, comprises seven Catholic laymen and four clergymen.

## Funeral Held For Fr. Brennan

(Continued from Page 1)

CELEBRANT of the funeral Mass was Rev. Joseph P. Brennan; Rev. Thomas Brennan was deacon; Rev. Charles J. McCarthy, subdeacon, and Rt. Rev. Msgr. Willard T. Craugh, assistant priest.

Deacons of honor were Monsignors John Duffy and Arthur Raigosa.

Monsignor Edward McAniff was master of ceremonies.

Serving the Mass were the Rev. Fathers Conrad Sundholm, Daniel Tomney, Thomas Erdie, Edwin Metzger, James Moynihan, John P. Hill-Fips, William Roche and William Gordinier.

Bearers were the Rev. Fathers Roger Baglin, Richard Brickler, Ronald Gasser, William Hogan, William Holberton and John Skvorak.

A priest choir directed by Rev. Robert Smith sang the Mass. Rev. Benedict Ehmann was organist.

Attending the Mass were the Rt. Rev. Monsignors John Maney, John McCafferty, Leslie Whalen, Frank Hoefen, George Eckl, Gerald Lambert, Richard Burns, Dennis Hickey, Francis Burns, Very Rev. Adelbert Schneider, and nearly 80 priests of the Diocese and religious orders.

Father Brennan is survived by a nephew, Rev. Joseph Brennan of St. Bernard's Seminary faculty and a niece, Mrs. William Murray. Burial was in the priests' plot at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. Office of the Dead was sung by priests of the Diocese Monday evening.

### Metrovic, Sculptor Dies

Notre Dame — (NC) — Requiem Mass for Ivan Metrovic, 78, internationally known sculptor, was offered in Sacred Heart church on the campus of the University of Notre Dame, where he had been professor of sculpture since 1955. Burial will be in his native Yugoslavia.

Metrovic died (Jan. 16) in St. Joseph's Hospital, South Bend, after he had suffered two strokes. He had been working earlier on the day of his death in his studio on the campus.

The Croatian-born artist was an outstanding sculptor of religious subjects. His works were exhibited in international exhibitions for more than 50 years. Among his works are a seven-foot "Pieta" which was exhibited for several years at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and now is at Sacred Heart church here.

### Jewels Given For Church

Lisbon — (RNS)—A woman (the Indies, whose tomb is in who said she wished to remain anonymous) offered all her jewels to build the foundation of a church in Portugal in honor of St. Francis Xavier, celebrated 16th century Apostle of this country. The jewels were forwarded to the Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in



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DEBBIE SUE WAS GIVEN ONLY 3 MONTHS TO LIVE WHEN SHE WAS BORN WITH SPINA BIFIDA (OPEN SPINE). BUT SHE LIVED AND HAD AN OPERATION TO CLOSE HER SPINE AT 8 MONTHS!

HER FATHER, JACK, IS A SURVIVOR FOR IDAHO STATE. HER MOTHER WORKED NIGHTS AS A WAITRESS TO HELP PAY FOR HER EARLY CARE. BEFORE MARCH OF DIMES WAS EXPANDED TO INCLUDE BIRTH DEFECTS!

THE STILL HAS A KIDNEY AILMENT AND CRIPPLING IN THE LEGS BUT CAN PLAY ACTIVELY. HER BABY SISTER, CARLA, IS A NORMAL CHILD!

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