

Frontier Priest, Philadelphia Bishop

(This is the last in a series of three articles on the Blessed John Neumann by Joann Price, staff writer for the New York Herald Tribune.)
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Using Williamsburg, 10 miles north of Buffalo, as home base, the sturdy Bohemian took over a wide circle of uncharted land, a parish of 400 poverty-stricken Catholic families, 800 of them German and the rest Irish, French and Scottish.

He moved to North Bush (now Kenmore, N.Y.) during the 1837 depression, sharing its brutal effects with his flock. There he finished building a log cabin rectory and church. His brother, Wenzel, joined him from Prachatz, the gnawing loneliness of four years on the frontier had taken a toll.

He was sick and he longed for priestly companionship. During three months of convalescence and prayer, he decided to join a group of missionaries known as the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the Redemptorists. Its purpose—"the care of the most abandoned souls"—appealed to the 27-year-old clergyman.

FOUR HUNDRED parishioners saw him board the lake steamer Oct. 8 or 9, 1840, for Erie. He continued by train to Pittsburgh to start a busy, unprecedented, novitiate: 3,000 more miles of mission work. During it he was stationed at seven posts, changed about eight times, quelled a parish row in Norwalk, Ohio, and finally took his vows at St. James Church, Baltimore, Jan. 16, 1842.

Father Neumann's energy in his assignments, in both Baltimore and Pittsburgh, were so outstanding that he was named head (vice-rector, later called vice-provost) of the Redemptorists in America five years after he had pronounced his vows. But the appointment failed to spell out the authority needed to meet New World conditions.

At his own request, he stepped down to the relative peace of becoming canonical rector, on Jan. 2, 1851, of St. Alphonsus Church in Baltimore.

Alliance Funds Restoration Said Essential

Washington — (NC) — The Catholic Association for International Peace has urged the Senate to restore \$200 million in Alliance for Progress funds slashed from the foreign aid bill by the House.

The CAIP said in a statement that it is "essential that we honor our commitments under the Alliance for Progress."

At the same time the Catholic place group was issuing its statement, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was approving (Oct. 18) a \$4.5 billion foreign aid bill which includes the full \$200 million sought by the administration for the Alliance. The House had cut this to \$450 million.

The foreign aid bill is expected to reach the Senate floor around Oct. 28. After Senate action, a Senate House conference will be necessary to reconcile differences between the two versions of the legislation.

Still later, Congress will have to vote on the actual appropriation legislation. The appropriation is almost always lower than the authorization, which is what is involved in the legislation now pending.

The CAIP said it was "distressed" by the action of the House in cutting the Alliance for Progress authorization by \$200 million.



Blessed John Neumann, pioneer of U.S. parochial school system.

"How good it is," he wrote at this time, "to be in the congregation (of Redemptorists) and to live in America."

"Here we can truly love God, work much and suffer a lot for Him and we do all this quietly and unnoted by the world." So he thought. The peace was not to last.

Some three months later, Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Baltimore, who was one of his penitents, appeared at the door of St. Alphonsus rectory on Saratoga St., to congratulate him on his arrival.

When Father Neumann got back, the spark of the Kenrick on his table caught his eye. Its significance burst over at the door of St. Alphonsus rectory on Saratoga St., to congratulate him on his arrival.

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burned the burdens of authority. He was to be consecrated a bishop. By the Pope's command.

There was no welcoming brass band to greet Bishop Neumann on March 30, 1852, when he got to Philadelphia. Philadelphia two days after he was consecrated in Baltimore. He preferred it that way. But the local members of his enormous flock of 170,000 had a gift for him that charmed him. It was the deed for a new school.

No one knew better than he the urgency of educating the children of his immigrants. Only four years before, he himself had become a U.S. citizen. Immigrants were pouring into the thousands on the dock on Delaware Ave. In the decade between 1847, after the Irish potato famine, and 1855 approximately 3 million immigrants entered the U.S. (which was the total of the previous 70 years). They were poor, dirty, unemployed, under-educated and on the defensive.

By May 3, 1852, Bishop Neumann had organized a group of influential Catholics into the first Central Board of Education ever drawn up in an American Catholic diocese. It was to coordinate instruction, start a building fund and organize parish schools. Hiring teachers would be left to pastors of the 113 parishes in an area that included eastern Pennsylvania, all of Delaware and southern New Jersey.

The school system was Bishop Neumann's distinctive contribution to the vigorous parish life enjoyed by America's 40 million Catholics today. He brought in several orders of priests and sisters to teach in the schools.

The Bishop himself loved children. He was a born catechist. A child carried candy in his pocket, what was even more fascinating to small fry was his microscope. Often he would enthrall the newly confirmed on his parish visits by showing them a drop of water alive with life, under its lens. He once traveled 18 miles to confirm one child.

BUT HIS greatest apostolate was to Catholics in the coal towns clustered about the western terminals of the railroad canal routes. These canonical visitations would take him away from Logan Square as long as seven weeks at a time.

On Jan. 5, 1860, Bishop Neumann told a visitor after lunch: "I have to go out on a little business and the fresh air will do me good." Then, strangely, he added: "A man must always be ready for death when he is ready for God."

A few hours later, coming from a lawyer's office, he crumpled to the sidewalk outside a stranger's home at 2318 Vin St. with a stroke. He was 49.

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Seek Justice For Schools Says Editor

Brooklyn — (NC) — A Catholic editor urged here that modern day Catholics take up the work of seeking justice for Catholic school children in the spirit of Bishop John N. Neumann, C.S.S.R., who was beatified in Rome October 13.

Don Zirkel, news editor of the Tablet, Brooklyn diocesan newspaper, said the beatification of Bishop Neumann, 19th century Bishop of Philadelphia, should serve as a challenge to contemporary Catholics.

HE NOTED that Bishop Neumann served on a committee of the U.S. Bishops' First Plenary Council of Baltimore which in 1852 issued a decree urging all pastors to establish parish schools.

"Over a century has passed since that decree, and we have waited long enough," Zirkel said. "More than half of the Catholic children in this country attend public schools and the percentage is increasing every year."

"Why? Because we have been deprived of distributive justice," he said. "It is 'time that we get equal treatment for our children on the local, state and federal level.'"

"Corrective legislation will result not from statements of the hierarchy but from direct, organized, forceful, non-partisan political action," Zirkel said.

He spoke at a banquet during the annual joint state convention of the Catholic Central Union, Catholic Women's Union, and Catholic Central Youth Union. The banquet followed a Solemn Mass at St. James cathedral.

Seton Medal For JFK Mother

Greenburg, Pa. — (RNS) — Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy, the President's mother, was awarded the Elizabeth Seton Medal from Seton Hall College, a Roman Catholic women's school conducted here by the Sisters of Charity.

Monk's Diet Refutes Claims

Washington — (NC) — The diet of a group of Trappist monks may explode widely advertised claims that certain foods lead to ward off heart attacks.

Two medical researchers from George Washington University here made intensive studies of the blood cholesterol level of monks at the Trappist monastery at nearby Berryville, Va. High cholesterol content in the bloodstream is said to have a bearing on susceptibility to heart attacks.

It was expected that the monks' fat-free diet would result in a low cholesterol level. However, the researchers' tests revealed no special lowering of the cholesterol figures. One Trappist who had been on his order's rigid diet for 40 years was found, for example, to have an average reading.

65 Years A Priest
Montreal — (NC) — Auxiliary Bishop Conrad Chamaux, of Montreal, living in retirement at Hotel Dieu Hospital, quietly observed the 65th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Bishop Chamaux, 88, has been a bishop for 22 years.

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