

The Catholic COURIER

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE ROCHESTER DIOCESE

Journal

78th Year

ROCHESTER, N. Y., FRIDAY, JAN. 20, 1967

Price 15 cents



St. Louis — (RNS) — Bishop Sheen of Rochester gives a warm greeting to Msgr. Edward T. O'Meara of St. Louis who has succeeded him as national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. From 1956-60, Msgr. O'Meara served under Bishop Sheen as the agency's assistant director in New York. The meeting between the two old friends took place at the St. Louis airport.

'Don't Try to be Sheen'

Mission Agency's New Chief

St. Louis — (RNS) — Msgr. Edward T. O'Meara of St. Louis has been named national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. He succeeds Bishop Fulton J. Sheen of Rochester.

The appointment was confirmed in a letter to Joseph Cardinal Ritter from Gregory Cardinal Agagianian, prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

Msgr. O'Meara has been director of the archdiocesan Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

"Following Bishop Sheen will be hard," Msgr. O'Meara told the St. Louis Review, archdiocesan newspaper, in an interview. "The only way to do it would

be to make up your mind not to try to be Sheen. He did great things during his tenure as national director, the most important being that he put the missions on the map."

Msgr. O'Meara had served four years with Bishop Sheen, from 1956 to 1960, as assistant national director of SPF. He has been pastor of the St. Louis Cathedral since March.

Ordained in 1946, Msgr. O'Meara first served as assistant pastor at St. Louis Cathedral and then, in 1950, went to Rome to study at the Angelicum. He returned to the archdiocese in 1952 and was in parish work until joining Bishop Sheen's staff as assistant director in November, 1956. He became St.

Louis director of the SPF in 1960, and also supervised the archdiocesan Papal Volunteers for Latin America.

He sees his assignment principally as one of running the National office to assure "the continuance and development of the institutional Church in the mission territories."

"The word 'mission,' he said, "is an unhappy designation and it will be changed. It smacks too much of religious colonialism at a time when the principal aim of the Society is to foster a native pastoral clergy."

Msgr. O'Meara said that one-fourth of all contributions to the Society goes for this work, considered important because a native clergy is "obviously the thing which assures the continuity of the Church in the area that is now considered mission territory."

"This does not say that the Church is unconcerned with the poor of these lands, with their happiness and with improving their lot," he said. "Obviously, the Church is interested in these things, but it is equally obvious that the Church cannot render these services before it exists."

Serran Predicts Vocation Gains

Chicago — (NC) — Serra Club members in the Philippines are bent on inspiring a new breed of seminarians to overcome a priest shortage and the frustration which stems from an apathetic laity there, an official of the international organization said here.

John A. Donahue of Chicago, assistant executive director of the organization of business and professional men dedicated to fostering vocations to religious life, said: "The Philippines offer a great harvest for a Christian revolution based on implementation of Vatican Council II decrees."

He's been shot out of the sky, he wears the paratrooper wings of two armies, has a chest full of honors, has said as many as seven Masses on one Sunday — and now he's back home for at least two or three years.

He's worn a chaplain's uniform since 1947 and would like to see a sizeable number of younger priests don the uniform too.

This is Father Gerard J. Gefell, a priest of the Rochester Diocese, who's on the way to being a full Colonel, one of 22 Army chaplains selected out of 98 candidates for advancement from his present Lieutenant Colonel rank.

Just before he left Vietnam in mid-December he was enrolled in the Legion of Merit for "outstanding excellence in

(Father Freemeser, he wears two collars, see page seven.)

performance of duty under fire." An inch long maroon and white ribbon tops close to a dozen other ribbons and awards.

He is one of a very few priests to wear the paratrooper wings of two armies — the United States and South Vietnam. He gained the first set, with its silver star, for making well over 100 jumps with U.S. troops on battle-like maneuvers. But his second set of wings, with a gold star, is for one jump — and he admits "I was scared to death" — with Vietnamese troops into Viet Cong territory.

His record credits him with over 215 hours in the air in his year in Vietnam, a total comparable to some combat pilots.

How did he build up such a record?

"I'd usually say two Masses each Sunday in Saigon for troops there then get a helicopter ride down to the delta area — the area you're reading so much about these days in the newspapers. We'd go over the swamps only five feet above the reeds and I'd go to about five different troop locations and say Mass at each one, Father Gefell explained.

He said it was on one such flight that VC sniper fire hit the helicopter and "we were down for three hours in VC



Father Gerard Gefell made his chaplain's rounds in Vietnam in helicopter — and was shot down by Viet Cong ground fire but a rescue crew pulled him out of Communist-infested area.

territory but another chopper came along and got us out."

He was also under Viet Cong fire when he went out to the Baton Rouge Victory freighter sunk by a VC mine in the Long Tau River near Saigon. Father Gefell and two other chaplains went to the scene of the sinking to be on hand for last rites as victims were extricated from the wrecked ship.

He said chaplains prefer to

be with the troops in combat areas rather than behind the lines — although in Vietnam "everyplace is a battle field."

He described how he had to walk about half a mile each morning from his residence to the chapel where he said Mass in Saigon. "And I didn't know what minute some sniper would open fire or I'd step on a mine. There's an average of 17 incidents like that each day in just that one city."

FATHER GEFELL is thoroughly convinced that Cardinal Spellman was right in saying only a total U.S. victory can bring true peace there.

"Frankly I can't understand why so many Americans can't see the Communist element in this whole affair. The Viet Cong would literally dry up and vanish if support from North Vietnam would stop. They're a bandit element out to deprive the South Vietnamese people of freedom and peace."

Father Gefell insisted, "This is no civil war. The Viet Cong aren't like our Civil War Confederates at all."

The new English language liturgy works well, he said. "In the Army you get used to doing what you're told so we've had no arguments at all over there." He said chaplains have new, light-weight Mass kits with aluminum chalices and camouflaged chasubles.

One chaplain, he said, named Father Francis Kovacic from Mobile, Alabama, was saying Mass for troops at a forward position when, at consecration time, Viet Cong snipers opened fire. The priest, it was reported, in very explicit terms told his little congregation to get down low — they had been standing — and he finished the Mass kneeling.

One of the GIs later quipped, "It took VC fire to get a priest on his knees!"

Father Gefell now heads for a desk job for an expected three years at the office of the Chief of Chaplains in Washington. He has a twin brother, also a priest, also up for Colonel rank, who is a chaplain in Germany. The two spent Christmas together and Father Thomas Lombard, who is studying in Rome, came up to Goepfingen, near Stuttgart, for the mid-night Mass for GIs there.

One of Father Gefell's chief chores in Washington will be to fill the sadly vacant chaplain's spots around the world.

"Vietnam gets priority," he said, "but there are vacancies in American and overseas military bases where we need far more Catholic priests than are presently volunteering."

"Want me?" I asked. "No, you're too old!" he replied. —Father Henry A. Atwell

B'rith Kodesh, Colgate On Bishop's Schedule

Bishop Sheen will speak at a Jewish temple and at a Baptist chapel in Rochester — as well as at Catholic churches in the southern tier of his own Diocese.

The Rochester Jewish community will meet him at Temple B'rith Kodesh on Elmwood Ave. Monday, Jan. 30, at 8:15 p.m.

He is expected to speak to the congregation in the Temple's recently completed sanctuary and then meet informally and individually with them in the Temple's auditorium.

Bishop Sheen is also scheduled to take part in and speak at the chapel service at Colgate Rochester Divinity School Wednesday, April 12, at 10:40 a.m.

He will make a four day tour of Catholic churches and institutions in Elmira, Horseheads and Corning, this week Wednesday through Saturday, Jan. 25 to 28.

During this southern tier tour he will visit St. Joseph's Hospital, the Dominican nuns' monastery in Elmira, the Benedictine monks at Mount Saviour and the Elmira Reformatory. He will also attend the Elmira Community Chest dinner at the Mark Twain Hotel Wednesday evening.

His schedule of parish visits includes: Wednesday — Enroute to Elmira, visit St. Mary Our Mother Church, Horseheads; Thursday — Mass at St. John the Baptist Church, Elmira, noon; Mass at St. Mary's Church, 8 p.m.; Friday — Mass at St. Patrick's Church, 8 p.m.; Saturday — Mass at St. Vincent de Paul Church, Corning, 10 a.m.

Unity Week Draws Throngs

Services in scores of churches throughout the area of the Rochester Diocese have been filled with thousands praying this week for religious unity.

The unity rites drew Catholics and Protestants to one another's churches in unprecedented numbers to take part in the Jan. 18 to 25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Many rites linking neighboring churches are scheduled for this Sunday. Parish bulletins should be consulted for time and place.

Too Many Unity Rites

London — (RNS) — Ecumenism: 1967 can be evaluated by a note in a Bristol newspaper.

"We are glad to say that there are so many activities being organized in the west country during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity that it will be quite impossible to list them all."

So reported Contact, an inter-denominational journal having a circulation of 100,000 in Bristol, considered by many to be the most ecumenical-minded area of England.

One of the major engagements of the "Week" calls for John Cardinal Heenan of Westminster to preach at a united service of Catholics, Anglicans and Free Church members in the historic Free Trade Hall of Manchester on Friday, Jan. 20.

IF YOU MOVE... let us know about it so we can keep your Courier coming to you on time. Phone or mail us notice of your change of address. Include your old address and new address and the name of your parish.

Courier Journal, 35 Scio St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. Phone-716-454-7050.

The Church: Sign of the Times

People of God, A People on a Journey

By REV. ALBERT SHAMON

The Church is the sign of God's presence among men. This sign consists in a people of God — a people called to God by Christ, a people made one by the same divine life, a people manifesting this basic inner unity by a love that reaches up to God and out to all.

The Church is a light of revelation to the world.

The story is told of a heroic mother who sacrificed her home and all her possessions to save her husband and sons. They were fishermen on the tempestuous North Sea. One night father and sons were caught in a fierce storm.

No stars were visible to guide them to shore. Without a beacon light, shipwreck and drowning were inevitable. The anxious mother on shore intuitively sensed the need of her loved ones. Bravely and desperately, she set fire to her home and all her belongings. By its blazing light, she drew them to the shores of safety.

Such too is the Church — a brightly blazing beacon becoming all mankind to the harbor of truth and life.

However in thinking of the Church as a sign, we are liable to reduce her role to a purely passive one. There is possible the danger of likening her to a signpost that guides the way for others without taking a step itself.

Is the Church of God so inert



Father Albert Shamon is pastor of St. Patrick's Church, Victor, and widely known as an author and lecturer on theological topics. In this series of articles he explains in popular terms the documents of the Vatican Council.

— a sign that is meant to stand still and wait till all the nations come to her?

We all know better. "Go," was Christ's last command to his Church — "go, teach all nations." And that "go" was more than a wish or a mere counsel; it was a positive command.

The Church is by her very nature missionary. For the sign that is the Church is people. The Church is the people of God and people are alive, living beings; life denotes activity. But before treating of the activity of the Church, let us consider first that happy title the Council used to designate her, "the people of God."

To write effectively, emphasis is all important. To emphasize nothing in speaking is the technique of dead-pan comedians. Lack of emphasis is equally ludicrous in writing. One of the best ways to secure emphasis is by position. How much more forceful Christ made the beatitudes by reversing the normal position of words. He said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit" instead of

the much less emphatic "The poor in spirit are blessed."

WHAT HAS THIS to do with the Church? Much.

The second chapter in the Constitution on the Church is the one titled "The People of God." In other words, the people won second place, got in before the hierarchy. The order might have been — the nature of the Church (chapter 1); the hierarchy (chapter 2); and the people of God (chapter 3). In fact that had been the usual order in the theology manuals since the Reformation. Even the first draft of the document on the Church, rejected by the Council Fathers, followed this order.

The 18th century Reformers had denied the hierarchical structure of the Church. In rebuttal, the Church had naturally stressed its visible, structural nature; and, just as naturally (as nearly always happens in an argument) overemphasized this side of the Church.

To alter this order deliberately indicates that the Coun-

Detroit Girds For Battle On Poverty

Detroit — (NC) — Archbishop John F. Bearden of Detroit has established an archdiocesan community affairs department to coordinate and extend existing Catholic drives against poverty and discrimination.

Edward J. Robinson, 33, an industrial personnel specialist who just completed a term as a Michigan state senator, was named head of the new department.

Included in the new department will be an existing human relations division to combat discrimination, a poverty program which will be merged into a new human resources division, and a new housing and urban development division.

According to the executive director of the new department, its object will be "to represent the people of the archdiocese to government, industry, labor, other religions, minority groups and the general public on matters relating to the general welfare."

Free in Congo

Kinshasa — (NC) — Father Pierre Snoeckx, a Belgian, and two Congolese Brothers, all members of the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, have been liberated by the Congolese National Army.

Father Snoeckx, a prisoner of the Simba rebels since Aug. 21, 1966, was freed late in December.

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