

The Bishop Was a Saint and a Gentleman

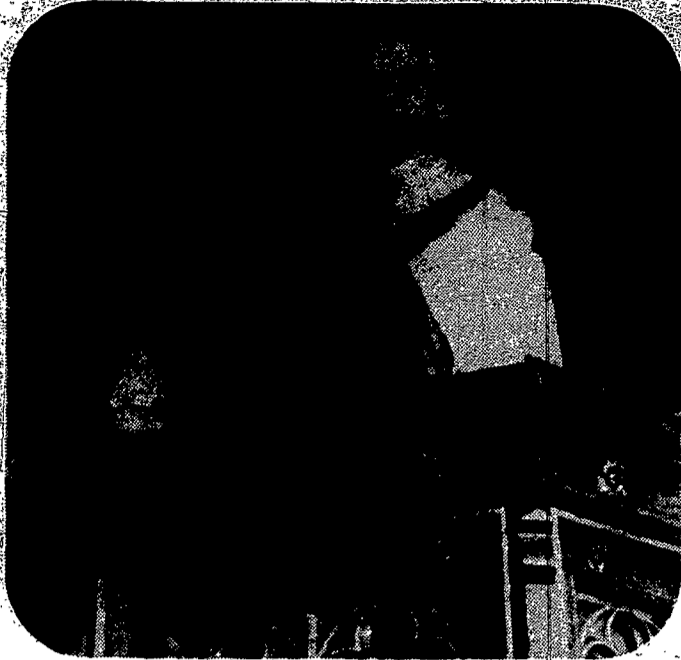
Bishop Lawrence B. Casey of Paterson delivered the following eulogy Monday at Bishop Kearney's funeral Mass.

Your Eminence, Cardinal Cooke, Bishop Hogan, my brother bishops and priests, my brothers and sisters in Christ:

How do you capture 92 years? Bishop Kearney's death marks the end of an era. Along with Monsignor George Eckl, he was one of the last surviving links with the founder of the diocese. Eighty years ago, the Bishop was an altar boy at Saint Agnes Church in the heart of Manhattan. Bernard McQuaid, the first Bishop of Rochester, always celebrated Mass at Saint Agnes when he visited New York, and James Kearney was his server. The hardy old pioneer bishop had no way of knowing that this boy would succeed him forty years later.

These bishops of different eras had the same mission: to preach the Gospel and to lead their flock to eternal life. Bernard McQuaid worked hard for 41 years to lay a firm foundation for the Church of Rochester. His resources and his means of communication with his scattered parishes were limited, but he planned well for the future. Today, we enjoy the fruit of his labors and his vision.

Bishop Kearney came to Rochester from Salt Lake City in 1937, toward the



Bishop Casey gives eulogy.

close of the Great Depression. He saw the wheels of industry begin to turn full-speed again, an augury of the period of vast expansion which was to take place later in his regime. Very soon, the Bishop took up the formidable task of leading and heartening his people during the dark days of World War II. He provided not only for the spiritual needs of his flock at home but also for the men and women serving in the armed forces. Here, Bishop Kearney was principal contributor to one of the brightest chapters in the history of this diocese: the service record of the 42 diocesan priests who volunteered to be military chaplains.

During the depression and the war years, the man we mourn today felt keenly the crushing burdens of his people's sufferings. His vibrant prayer life, however, gave him a certain buoyancy and a serenity of spirit and he took the good and bad years with equal grace. One thinks of the words of the artist, Matisse, who wrote, "I have always tried to give my work the lightness and freshness of springtime: that never lets anyone know the labors it has cost."

When there were reverses at the office, the Bishop usually had some humorous remark to break the tension. His Chancery was a low-key operation; there was an

almost casual air about the place. Our boss was a patient man and easy to work for. He trusted us.

James Edward Kearney's last 20 years as Bishop of Rochester were busy and productive. The war was over, new parishes had to be established, and churches and schools provided for the rapidly expanding population. One of the brightest jewels in the Bishop's crown was his contribution to Catholic education—not only his strong leadership and moral support but the schools he saw built—Saint John Fisher College, Saint Andrew's Seminary, six high schools and forty-five grammar schools. The faith of their thousands of alumni is silent but powerful testimony today of his courage and pastoral vision.

The school buildings and many others erected during Bishop Kearney's administration will crumble into dust some day. His work with souls will not; it will endure forever. This man was spiritual father to so many. He ordained the great majority of the priests who are present today. There's always a deep relationship between a priest and his ordaining bishop. It adds up to a special kind of fatherhood. The Bishop confirmed well over 200,000 adults and children, and he made it possible for so many thousands of these young people to enjoy a Catholic education.

For Bishop Kearney, the young were the dearest members of his flock. The New Year's Reception at his home for the families of the diocese, the annual Blessing of the Babies at the Cathedral, the Holy Spirit Masses each year at all the high schools, the parties to which the alumnae of the various high schools and Nazareth College brought their children—all of these were special in his calendar. After a confirmation, the procession usually arrived back at the rectory some minutes ahead of the Bishop. He'd still be

standing outside the church, blessing infants resting in their mothers' arms.

This apostle of charity had a personal interest in the care of the poor, the sick and the unfortunate. He expanded the diocesan Catholic Charities with its highly diversified program of help for the needy. He also encouraged and approved large additions to the three Catholic hospitals of the diocese, and built the new Saint Ann's Home where he was to spend his last days.

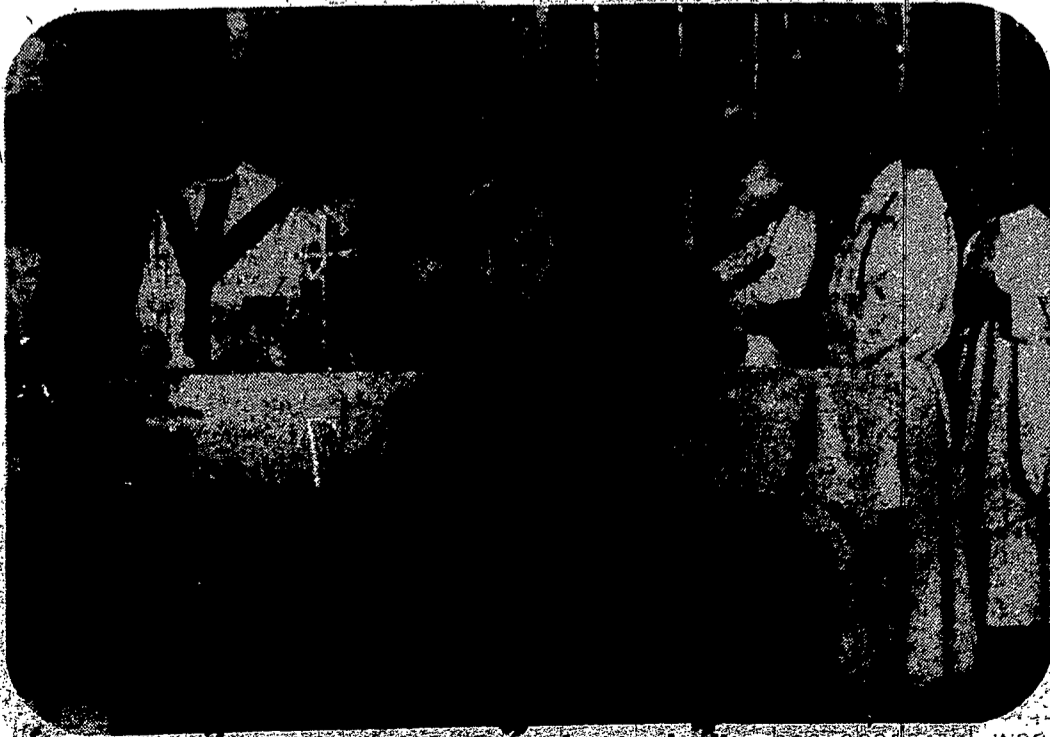
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Our deepest sorrow to the community on the loss of the Most Reverend Bishop James E. Kearney.

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Bishops in attendance at Monday's funeral Mass included Archbishop John J. Maguire, coadjutor archbishop of New York City; Auxiliary Bishop Patrick V. Ahern of New York City; retired Auxiliary Bishop John M. Fearn of New York City; Bishop Francis J. Mugavero of Brooklyn; Bishop Stanislaus Brzana of Ogdensburg; Bishop Edward T. O'Meara, director, Propagation of the Faith; Bishop Joseph Lennox Federal of Salt Lake City.



Cardinal Cooke during the Monday liturgy.

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SHARING THE LOSS OF BISHOP KEARNEY WITH THE COMMUNITY.