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Mary's Birth Commemorated

By MARTIN TOOMBS
Southern Tier Editor

Corning—The Southern Tier Curia Legion of Mary's observance of the bimillennial of the birth of Mary drew more than 800 persons to St. Mary's Church Sept. 8.

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, scheduled to be the principal concelebrant and homilist, was hospitalized and unable to attend the observance. He did record a homily, which was played to those attending the ceremony marking the 2,000th anniversary of Mary's birth.

Principal concelebrants for the Mass were Fathers Bartholomew O'Brien, Michael Hogan and Joseph Egan. They were joined by many other priests from throughout the Southern Tier.

Following the Mass, the curia's annual reunion took place in Corning Catholic School South.

Archbishop Sheen's 40-minute homily maintained the attention of those attending, although at times the former bishop of Rochester's words were difficult to understand over the church's sound system.

Archbishop Sheen prefaced his remarks by noting the difficulties under which he was making the recording, with equipment attached to him, and with interruptions by medical personnel.

"This is a very unaccustomed way to address you," he said, "I am flat on my back in a hospital."

He added that he expected to be in the hospital "for only a few days."

His message to the legionnaires consisted of a discussion of three problems "with which I believe the Legion of Mary has to deal:" unmarried mothers, protection of life, and the problem of pain.

"In a certain sense, Mary was an unmarried mother," Archbishop Sheen pointed out, as she "conceived by the Holy Spirit and not by man."

He stressed the problems that becoming pregnant before marrying Joseph probably caused for Mary, but she trusted in God, he said, and therefore accepted her difficulties. Joseph also let his trust in God control his actions. "Joseph had a mind to put her away," when he



Photo by Martin Toombs

Fathers Michael Hogan, Bartholomew O'Brien and Joseph Egan lead celebration of Mass commemorating the bimillennial of Mary's birth.

discovered that she was pregnant, Archbishop Sheen noted, but didn't after having been told by an angel how it was that Mary had become pregnant.

"Thus Mary became the patron of all unmarried mothers," he pointed out.

Some persons in the church were converts, he noted, and compared their conversion to Mary's conception. For converts, he said, there was "a moment in your life when Christ came in."

"Christ came to dwell in your heart as he came to dwell in the womb of the Blessed Mother," he said; "How did Christ come to dwell inside your heart? By hearing the word of God. How did Mary conceive in her womb? By hearing the word of God."

Christ's action on the

Cross indicated that Mary was to be regarded as the mother of all, he said. Before His death, He addressed the Apostle John as son, Archbishop Sheen noted, and Mary as mother, which, he said, established Himself as the universal Father, and Mary as the universal Mother.

Mary as the Blessed Mother is the protector of all life, Archbishop Sheen pointed out, noting the need for legionnaires to work for the protection of all human life.

He also discussed the role of pain in being a Christian.

"Without the Cross there is no forgiveness of sin," he said, calling on persons to accept suffering and offer it up to God.

To illustrate his point, he noted that during his four-and-a-half month

hospital stay, he had three crises which each required an operation. The three operations, he recounted, occurred on three feasts of the Blessed Mother: Sept. 12, Aug. 15, and Sept. 8.

"I found a particular delight in having been obliged to undergo suffering on these feasts of Our Lady," he said. "Simply because we love Our Lady, it does not mean that we are exempt from pain."

She herself was not exempt from pain, he noted, pointing out that she had given birth in a stable, and had suffered on Calvary.

"There is no salvation without the Cross," he emphasized, and "we cannot walk around it."

He added that he has observed "a general despoliation of the Cross in Christianity," noting that

crucifixes have been removed from many buildings and are worn less frequently. The result, he said, is "that a great beacon of salvation is lost to all passerby."

"In as much as the Legion of Mary has to deal with the pain and suffering of others," Archbishop Sheen said, legionnaires should "teach the faithful to fill up the quota of suffering which the Lord has left unfilled."

He concluded his homily by noting that "it's not easy to be a legionnaire" and that "only a small proportion of this community belongs to you." Many are not members because of the effort and time required, he noted. But he assured them that "when you legionnaires go before the throne of Our Lord," their good works will not be forgotten.

Deaths

Mary FitzGerald, Charities Founder

Horseheads—Mass of Christian Burial for Miss Mary E. FitzGerald, founder of Elmira Catholic Charities, was celebrated Sept. 11 at St. Mary Our Mother Church.

Miss FitzGerald died Sept. 8 at St. Joseph's Hospital following an extended illness. She was 79.

She is survived by a brother, Dr. Edward FitzGerald of Connellsville, Pa., a niece, Mrs. Carlyle (Rae Catherine) Drake of Elmira, and several other nieces and nephews.

Miss FitzGerald founded Catholic Charities in Elmira in 1930, and continued as the family service agency's director until her retirement in 1966.

For the first few months, as director of the Community Chest organization, she worked as the only staff. She solidified the work of the various parish St. Vincent de Paul Societies, which had been assisting families. Later, she formed the Ladies of Charity in Elmira.

Catholic Charities had been renamed Catholic Family Services by the time of her retirement. Later the agency was restructured to form Family Services of Chemung County in conjunction with Child and Family Service of Chemung County.

In addition to being a member of the Ladies of Charity, she was a parishioner and former religion teacher at St. Mary Our Mother Parish, and a member of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the National Conference of Social Work, and the state Conference of Social Work.

Priests concelebrating the burial Mass were Fathers Bartholomew O'Brien, Joseph Egan, Richard Murphy, William Burns and William Tobin.

The Ladies of Charity acted as an honor guard; burial was in St. Mary's Cemetery, Horseheads.

Contributions to the Dominican Monastery, Elmira, and St. Mary Our Mother's building fund will be acknowledged by the family.

Alcoholism Seminar

Elmira—Recidivism in public intoxication arrests in Buffalo will be the topic of the Alcoholism Seminar at St. Joseph's Hospital Sept. 21. Forrest E. Stebbins, community coordinator, will be speaking at the seminar, in the Doctors Meeting Room at 12:15 p.m. Further information can be obtained by contacting the Social Work STARS Department at St. Joseph's, 733-6541.

Corning—Rosalie Muschal-Reinhardt will be the featured speaker at a Women's Retreat being sponsored by women of St. Patrick's Parish Tuesday, Oct. 10 in the parish hall.

The retreat, billed as a day of "Growing with Christ," will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and is open to any interested woman. Babysitting will be available, and a luncheon will be served. There will be no admission charge.

Ms. Muschal-Reinhardt, of Rochester, is a former diocesan Religious Education Department staff member. She holds a Master of Divinity degree from the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago. Currently she is co-coordinator of In Hope for the Future, a ministerial service, and is the coordinator of the national office of the Women's Ordination Conference.

Sister Agnes Catherine Battersby, St. Patrick's

pastoral assistant, noted that four of the women involved in planning the retreat went to a similar program last May, were impressed, and discussed planning a day for women at St. Patrick's. They are "just some people who think this will be a great thing for our women," sister noted, adding, "and I do too."

The women belong to no specific group, but, with some additional volunteers, have organized their efforts to make the program possible.

To pay the day's expenses, the group sponsored a home-sales party and a bake sale at Masses at St. Patrick's one weekend.

Registration will begin at 9 a.m., and coffee and donuts will be available. Ms. Muschal-Reinhardt will be speaking and conducting discussions throughout the program, which also will include prayer and singing. A prayer service will conclude the day's events at 3 p.m.

Retreat Set Sept. 23

Dansville—A Women's Interfaith Retreat looking at "Christian Women in Today's Society" will be conducted Saturday, Sept. 23 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Rod and Gun Club.

The speaker will be Rev. Jane S. Glassbrook, an ordained Presbyterian minister on the staff of Rochester's Downtown Presbyterian Church. Her topic will be "Conflicting Signals with Differing Expectations."

Rev. Glassbrook works in pastoral care, and coordinates the local mission of the church in Action for Church and Community Together. She was the first ordained woman elected to the board of Auburn Seminary.

Rev. Glassbrook will address the women attending during the morning session. The afternoon session will include four workshops: looking at parenting, aging



Five of the women organizing the Women's Retreat at St. Patrick's, Corning, look over the closing prayer service. They are, front (from left) Anna Black, Lola O'Dell and Sally Walter; back, Helen Howard and Sister Agnes Catherine.

Reservations would be appreciated by Oct. 1, but registration also will be possible on the day of the

retreat. Those wishing to make reservations may contact Ann Manning, 936-8351; Lola O'Dell, 962-3401; or Sally Walter, 524-6524.

concerns, community youth and prayer.

The program also will include time for meditation, Scripture study, singing and discussions, and will close with a prayer service.

Participants are asked to bring a Bible, paper, pencil, table service, and a dish to pass. There will be a free-will offering to defray the costs of the program.

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