

Sacramental genealogy shows chain of episcopal succession

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Since Alex Haley published *Roots*, the story of his search for his ancestors in Africa, Americans have become increasingly interested in tracing their own lineages. Genealogy is, of course, an ideal hobby. It makes history come alive, strengthens the sense of family and brings out the Sherlock Holmes in all of us.

Catholic bishops belong to another sort of "family," the college of bishops. The bishops of the world are linked together through the centuries by the sacrament of holy orders, which Jesus instituted at the Last Supper. For at that supper, our Lord not only established the Eucharist, but also ordained the apostles to the Christian high priesthood. The Vatican II document *The Church* explains that the apostles passed on this "special gift . . . to their helpers by the imposition of hands, and it has been transmitted down to us in episcopal consecration" (#21).

One of the qualifications for a bishop to be considered a successor of the apostles, therefore, is to have received episcopal orders that can be traced back through the centuries from ordaining bishop to ordaining bishop. Tracking such a pedigree is a different sort of genealogical research, but it is an important and fascinating endeavor.

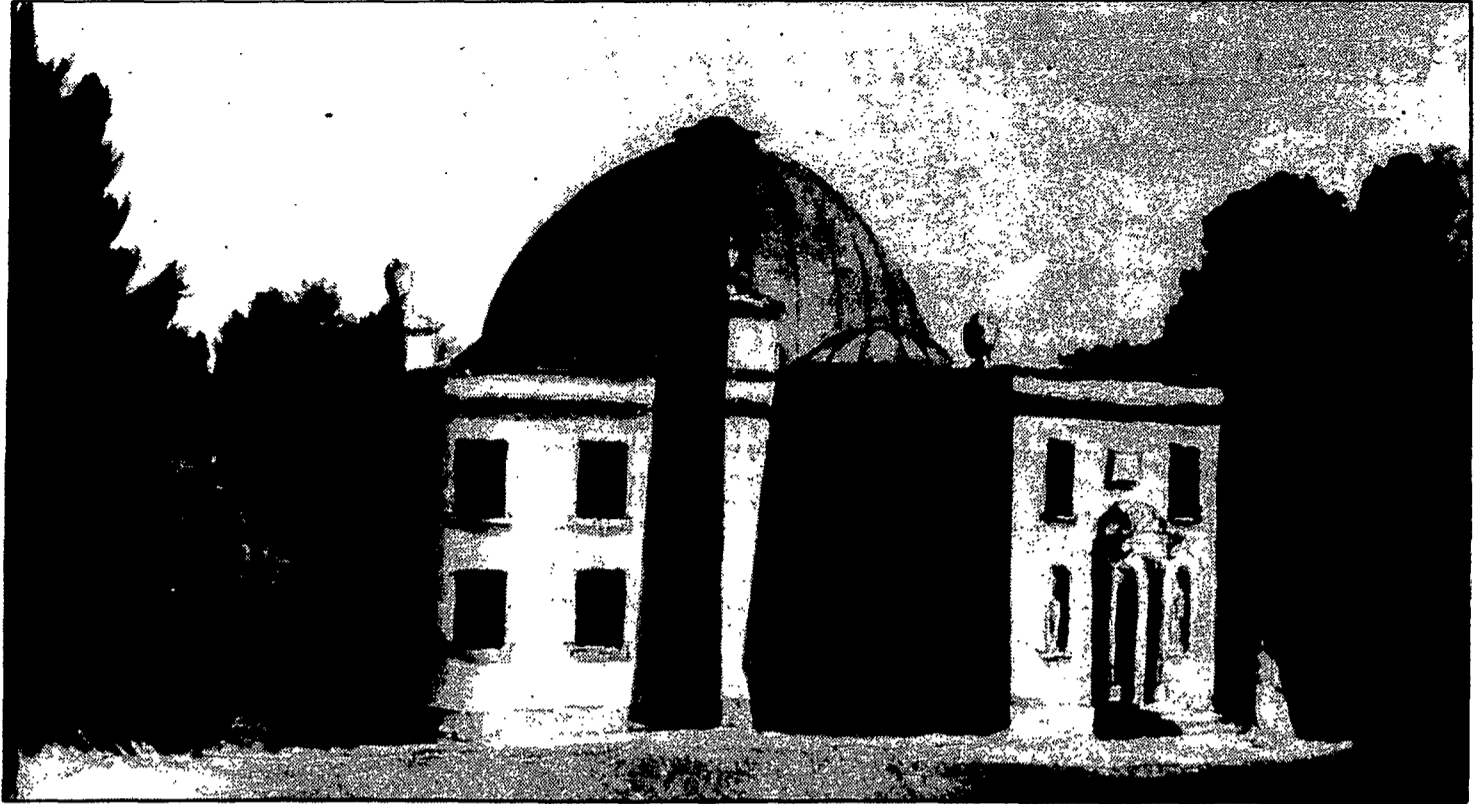
One engaged in sacramental genealogy could no more hope to uncover an unbroken chain linking a contemporary bishop to one of the apostles than a family genealogist could hope to trace his lineage back to Adam and Eve. The documentation just hasn't survived through the centuries. It is enough to stick to the Latin Rite St. Peter founded and to be content with studying the history of the American bishops.

This study of the American Latin-Rite lineage has been simplified by a genealogical tree published in 1963 by two American specialists, Jesse W. Lonsway and Aaron Pembleton. The book of charts, entitled *Episcopal Lineage of the Hierarchy of the United States, 1790-1963*, traces the chains of American episcopal orders as far back as Pope Gregory XII, who was consecrated in 1380 A.D. That's a long way from Holy Thursday, but 600 years of unbroken lineage is still pretty impressive.

Although the authority of all Rochester's 11 bishops — eight "ordinaries," or bishops in charge, and three auxiliaries — stems from Roman origins, the bishops' consecrators tie them to different chains of succession. The most notable and probably the most lengthy of the U.S. chains is that initiated by the first American bishop, John Carroll. Four of Rochester's ordinaries had the honor of belonging to the Carroll sequence.

John Carroll, as bishop and later archbishop of Baltimore, did more than anyone else to start the American Catholic Church off in the right direction. Carroll (1735-1815) was born to an aristocratic Irish Catholic family that immigrated to Maryland in the late 17th century. When he was a teenager, he and his cousin Charles Carroll of Carrollton — a future signer of the Declaration of Independence — were sent to school in Europe.

After receiving his early education at the hands of the English Jesuits at St. Omers in France, John Carroll entered the Jesuit order. He probably would have stayed on forever in Europe had Pope Clement XIV not suppressed the Jesuits in 1773. At that point, however, Father Carroll became a "secular" priest rather than a priest in a religious order. He returned



This watercolor (c. 1804) by Thomas Weld Jr. depicts Lulworth Chapel of Our Lady in Dorset, England, where Bishop Carroll was consecrated a bishop on August 15, 1790. Weld, a server at Carroll's Mass of consecration. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Joan Weld Berkeley.

to Maryland and started working as a missionary.

During the American Revolution, he met and won the admiration of several of the nation's founders, especially Benjamin Franklin. Because of his ability, zeal and know-how, John Carroll stood out when the time came for Rome to designate someone to shape the fledgling American Catholic Church.

In 1719, Pope Pius VI allowed the American clergy the privilege of electing the founding bishop of Baltimore, which was the first U.S. diocese. The clergy chose Carroll and, since the nation had no Catholic bishop to consecrate him, bishop-elect Carroll traveled to Dorset, England, for his episcopal consecration.

There, he received his orders in the Lulworth Castle chapel of Thomas Weld, a wealthy and devout Catholic landowner. Weld's lovely and remote seaside chapel to Our Lady, then brand-new, was the first freestanding Catholic church to be built in England after the Protestant Reformation. (I had the privilege of offering Mass there on June 12, 1976, for Carroll and his episcopal "descendants," Father Joseph P. Brennan of Rochester served the Mass.)

Because the Catholic Church in England was still technically proscribed by the crown, Bishop Carroll's consecration ceremony — which took place on August 15, 1790 — was conducted without publicity. The consecrating bishop was the ordinary of England's "western district," the talented English Benedictine Charles Walmesley (1722-1797). Carroll was rather amused by the abundance of holy oil that Walmesley used for the anointing of the hands and head. The old gentleman was nothing if not thorough!

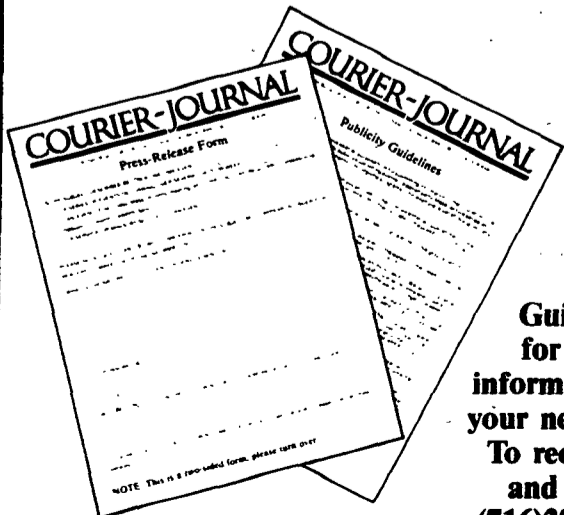
Once Bishop Carroll returned to the United States, he was able to pass on episcopal orders to American bishops of the second generation. For years the bishops of New York

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Bishop Matthew H. Clark receives his episcopal consecration from Pope John Paul II during ceremonies in Rome.

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The winner was Lawrence Patti of M.C.C.

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This week's question:

From what song do the following lyrics come from: "Now I'm feeling better 'cause I found out for sure, she took me to her doctor and he told me of a cure."

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____
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A:

Rules:

Each week, the Courier-Journal, in conjunction with the House of Guitars will feature a Music Trivia contest. All you have to do to enter is answer the question, fill in your name and address and the school you attend (if applicable), cut out the coupon, and send it in to the Courier-Journal. If more than one correct entry is received, a drawing will be held and one winning entry will be drawn.

If yours is the winning entry, you will be mailed a coupon for a free album or tape of your choice redeemable at the House of Guitars, 645 Titus Ave. All entries must be received within seven days of this paper's issue date. Winning names and answers will be printed the week following each drawing.

The Courier-Journal
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