

FATHER CONSIDINE'S SILVER JUBILEE

The first priest ordained for the old Vicariate Apostolic of Dakota is Father John W. Considine, now pastor of Minto, N.D. The twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination occurred on the 21st of last February, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of his arrival in Dakota, at Pembina, was the 17th of last April. The Right Rev. John Shanley, Bishop of Fargo, one of the three bishops who now administer what used to be, as late as 17 years ago, Bishop Marty's vicariate, wished to celebrate this double silver jubilee in a fashion becoming the admirably amicable relations between himself and his clergy. Wishing to get together as many of them as possible, he chose the summer and a day in the middle of the week, so that the Sunday-laboring missionaries might be free to foregather, which would have been more difficult in the cold days of February and the busy Lenten days of April. The 12th of July, falling on Wednesday, seemed all the more fitting in that this Catholic festival would rub off some of the brimstone that Orange celebrations yearly deposit on that date. Under the Bishop's directions—for good, humble Father Considine had nothing to do with the preparations, and would have shunned all publicity if he could—a committee of Minto laymen was organized and they sent out printed invitations, requesting a reply.

Besides the Right Reverend Bishop, who was the soul of the festival, and the jubilant himself, Father Considine, the following priests reported in person (names are given alphabetically): Fathers S. J. Arsensault, St. Thomas; D. V. Collins, Mandan; E. J. Conaty, Grand Forks; J. Dignan, Dickinson; M. Dougherty, Langdon; Lewis Drummond, S. J., St. Boniface, Man.; J. Fortin, Chicago; E. J. Geraghty, Reynolds; M. J. Hiltner, Mount Carmel; F. J. Just, Pisek; E. J. Kenny, Cando; S. Landolt; J. A. Leniex, Fargo; J. Quillinan, Casselton; J. F. Simpson, Larimore; Jos. F. Studnicka, Hankinson; A. Wagner, Kenmare; B. Waldowski, Warsaw. Three of these guests arrived at Minto on the eve of the great day and three remained till the 13th; all the rest came in the morning of the 12th and returned home in the evening. Several came from great distances, one from over four hundred miles.

Bishop Shanley arrived from Fargo by the delayed morning train just in time for High Mass at half past ten. As he entered the crowded sacristy where all the clergy were sweltering in the blistering heat, the Right Reverend Father in God, cheerful, and fresh as a daisy, produced a beautifully enamelled gold chalice, and in the name of all the clergy of the diocese, whose combined contributions had taken this form, he presented it to Father Considine as "a small token of the affection in which his brother priests held him." With a brief and bashful acknowledgement of this appropriate and unexpected gift, Father Considine vested as celebrant of the Jubilee Mass, Father Dougherty acting as deacon, Father Studnicka as sub-deacon, Father Quillinan as Master of Ceremonies, and the altar boys, in those pretty cassocks for which Minto is famous, serving with attentive eye on the able Master of Ceremonies. The Right Reverend Bishop officiated on the episcopal throne. The church was so crowded that almost thirty chairs had to be placed in every available corner. The organ was skillfully handled by Father Arsensault, while the well-trained choir received valuable assistance from Father Fortin, of Notre Dame de Chicago.

THE BISHOP'S SERMON

After the gospel Right Reverend Bishop Shanley spoke as follows:

Rev. Fathers, Brethren, "The Lord hath sworn and He will not repent: Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." (Ps. 109, 4).

Dear Brethren, those are words which are written of Jesus Christ our Lord by the psalmist and prophet David. Jesus Christ was the priest, the great, the high priest. When He came upon this earth He came not only as man but as God, for He was the Son of God, God Himself; and in fulfillment of His great mission, which was the teaching of men, the salvation of men's souls, He established a church. In that church He established a priesthood to offer sacrifice, to mediate for the remission of sins and to distribute the grace of God to those who sought out the priests with a contrite heart. This priesthood which He thus established was a combination of His own priesthood, so that those whom He selected as His apostles became sharers in that exalted dignity of the priesthood of Jesus Christ; and when the apostles whom he selected passed away in the ordinary course of nature and gave place to legitimate successors, they too became sharers in the priesthood of

Jesus Christ. And as the world went on and time went on, numerous successors to these first successors of the apostles were appointed and others succeeded to them until we reach our own day. Successors of the apostles are honored in our time because the Church was established for all time. "Wherever we find a priest honored today, we find one who shares in the priesthood of Christ, and we find one to whom those words may be applied: 'Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.'"

From this simple consideration it is apparent how exalted the dignity of the Catholic priesthood is. There is no station in life that can compare with it in dignity. As Christ, our great High Priest was the most exalted among the children of men by reason of this dignity which he occupied, so everyone who shares in the priesthood of Jesus Christ can truthfully say that he occupies the highest station on this earth. It was said of man in general by the same Psalmist that God had placed him a little below the angels; but of one class of men it can be said that God has placed them infinitely above the angels, and that class is the Catholic priesthood.

Consider for a moment what the priest is, the office that he has to perform. "We," says the Apostle, "are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor. 5, 20). An ambassador is one appointed by a nation to go abroad and represent before foreign peoples the nation to which he belongs. In his own person the ambassador holds all the dignity and power of his nation before the eyes of foreign nations. To those abroad he is the nation. Now the inspired writer declares that every priest is God's ambassador, representing God Himself to the people; and hence it is that the Holy Fathers have not hesitated to say, defining the priest, that the priest is another Christ. He is Christ Himself, living, teaching, acting among the people confided to his care. These are words of divine inspiration, they are divine truth. "We are the ambassadors of Christ," says the apostle of the priest. Elsewhere (1 Cor. 4, 1) he says, we are "dispensers of the mysteries of God," that is to say, we are the savers of souls by applying to souls God's saving graces. Thus, in general, the office of the Catholic priest is to be the ambassador of Christ, the dispenser of the mysteries of God.

Consider, next, the priest in the fulfillment of his priestly duties. The new-born babe, stained with the mark of original sin, is brought to him. Acting in the person of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, the priest pours water upon the head of that infant, pronouncing upon him a few words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." These words of the priest are ratified in high heaven by God's omnipotence. God says, "I, too, cleanse thee from sin, from original sin, and any other sin that may be in thy soul, in the name of the allpowerful, Almighty Trinity." A man steeped in iniquity, who has drunk in sin as he would drink water comes to the priest of God, kneels beside him, and with sorrow in his heart—real sorrow which prompts him never to sin again, reveals to that priest crimes that he would fain hide from himself, and asks that priest, as the minister of God, to pronounce over him the words of forgiveness. The priest weighs well the condition of that man's heart, finds him truly contrite, and acting as God's representative raises his hand in pardon, saying, "I absolve thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," and though that man's soul was as red as scarlet, it becomes white as the driven snow. He goes away sanctified, with the sentence of pardon pronounced by a sinful man (for the priest is capable of falling), and that sentence is sanctioned in high heaven, re-echoed in heaven. God at the same time blesses and forgives the sinner.

The priest clothes him self in the real vestments of the priesthood, goes to the altar of God, and there offers sacrifice. The night before He died Our Blessed Saviour, surrounded by His apostles, celebrated with them the Passover. Taking bread into his divine hands, he blessed it, broke it into parts and gave it to those present, saying, "Take ye and eat, for this is my body." Then taking the cup or chalice of wine, He blessed it in like manner, saying, "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the new testament which shall be shed for you unto the remission of sins. Do ye this for the commemoration of me." The Catholic priest comes to the altar of God, bringing with him some bread and wine. Standing there at the altar, after a few preliminary prayers he ventures to place himself deliberately in the place of God, and uses the very words that the Son of God used at the Last Supper. Of that which has the

outward appearance of bread he says. This is my body; of that which has the appearance of wine he says. This is my blood. The splendid miracle which took place at the Last Supper takes place on the altar at which that priest changed or transubstantiated into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. What more sublime offices on this earth can there be than those offices of the Catholic priest? To forgive the sins of men as God's accredited representative, to offer the sacrifice of the Cross anew for the salvation of souls and for the obtaining of God's grace, those are some of the offices of the Catholic priest.

It is because of this sublime dignity of the priest that bishops are cautioned to impose hands on men with great care, to exercise every precaution that those who present themselves shall be fitted to receive this dignity and to acquit themselves creditably of this sublime vocation. It is because of this that the Apostle says no man "doth take this honor to himself but he that is called by God, as Aaron was" (Heb. 5, 4). It is because of this sublime dignity of the priesthood that every true Catholic looks upon the priest of God with respect, veneration, nay, I may say, with awe. It is because of this sublime dignity that Catholics—true Catholics. I mean—listen respectfully to their priests and obey them, knowing that they are the ministers of God and the dispensers of the mysteries of God.

The priesthood is a sublime dignity, but it is a tremendous office, it is one at which the angel of God themselves might tremble. To teach men the truth of God, to lead men to a higher and more perfect life, this is the responsibility that rests upon the priest. The true priest realizes this responsibility, and not trusting to his own strength, seeks aid from Him who alone can aid, from his great High Priest, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and it is to the credit of the Catholic priests in general that nearly all the members of that body strive to prove themselves worthy of the sublime vocation they have received. I know of no one who is more deserving of honor than the priest of God who has kept his priesthood unspotted through all the years of his life, who has been a model to his flock of the true priest, and of whom it can be truly said that he has fulfilled his duty in every particular. Of priests of this character there is an almost infinite number. The exception to the rule is so rare that it scarcely merits attention. And it is because of the devotion of priests to their high calling that the world has become Christian, that the world has remained Christian. Take away the Catholic priesthood from the world to-day and from another generation, and the world would relapse into a state of paganism far worse than that which existed when Our Saviour appeared in Palestine. The Catholic priesthood has been the salvation of the world through the merits of Jesus Christ.

To-day, dear Brethren, we are called upon to testify our appreciation of a priest of God's Church. He is present in this sanctuary, and in his presence I feel it somewhat improper to speak words of great praise. He has been a pastor for over 25 years in this neighbourhood. He has borne the heat of the day, he has labored well during a quarter of a century, and God, be praised! he is still strong and vigorous and gives promise to labor for another quarter of a century. The first priest for the Territory of Dakota, which now comprises the dioceses of Fargo, Sioux Falls, and Lead, the first priest ordained as a priest properly belonging to that territory is the one who jubilant of to-day. Some twenty-five years ago, immediately after his ordination, he left, as Abraham of old did, his fathers house and all the ties that could bind him to a comfortable life elsewhere he sundered He came into this part of the world and poorly civilized Red River valley, made his home in a little log shanty at Pembina, and later on moved his headquarters down to Acton, and there he labored uncomplainingly and zealously that he might build up in this neighborhood a thriving Catholicity. I see before me with pleasure in this congregation some who were his props and supports in the trying days of Acton when comforts were things unheard of in this portion of the Red River valley. Who can tell the trials that good priest underwent in those days of pioneer life—the long journeys through all kinds of weather, that he might celebrate Mass for a few Catholics in some out-of-the-way corner of this valley, that he might bring the consolations of religion to the dying,

that he might baptize the little children in their homes because their parents could not bring them to the little shack called the church. Who can tell the sufferings he had to endure from some ungrateful scoundrels he was trying to benefit, for it unfortunately happens sometimes that those whom the priest tries most to benefit will turn against him most readily. On the other hand, with what consolation has he seen his little congregation, scattered from Grand Forks to the international boundary line, developing into new settlements, so that now he sees some thirty or forty priests laboring where he once labored alone and largely unappreciated a quarter of a century ago. It must be a consolation to your pastor to feel that his work has been a success here, and he must return thanks this blessed day to God that he has been spared to celebrate the 25th anniversary of his ordination and of his successful work in the Red River valley. The high appreciation in which he is held is evidenced by the large number of clergymen who have come from the most distant parts of the State with great expense and fatigue to themselves in order to show Father Considine the love they bear him. And the high appreciation of him by his parishioners is shown by the magnificent audience assembled in this church in the middle of the week.

When I began to speak I did not mean to allude to Father Considine at all; but the occasion has led me on. As bishop, I desire to say that there is none that stands higher in the esteem of his bishop, there is none to whom the bishop goes with more confidence for counsel than the venerable pastor of Minto. It is my earnest prayer that Father Considine may live to celebrate, as pastor of Minto, the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the holy Catholic priesthood.

The Banquet

After Mass the clergy repaired to Father Considine's residence to chat and compare notes on the memories evoked by this great day. Between twelve and one all the priests, with the Bishop at their head, accompanied by several prominent laymen, adjourned to a spacious hall where the ladies of the parish had prepared and now served an appetizing dinner. Towards the end of the repast Father Conaty was called upon by Bishop Shanley to act as toast master, a duty which he performed in the happiest manner. He began with a few words of brotherly greeting to Father Considine, whom he cited as a model of fidelity to his spiritual exercises. Then he called upon the Very Rev. Dean Collins, of Mandan, who gave a learned and interesting historical sketch of the evangelization of the Red River valley from the first arrival of Father, afterwards Bishop, Provencher in 1818, down to the present pastor of Minto, whom he considered the last of the great trio of pioneers in the United States portion of the valley, the two others being Fathers Dumoulin and Belcourt. Speaking next of the characteristic virtues of the model priest, he insisted particularly upon even-handed justice, charity and piety which he found all admirably exemplified in the venerable jubilarian, the virtue of piety being especially salient in his earnest advocacy of the Priests' Eucharistic League.

Father Drummond of St. Boniface, Manitoba, being next called upon, said he deemed it a great honor to represent the Canadian portion of the Red River valley in this memorable gathering. He had been pleased to hear Dean Collins recall the pioneer work of those heroic priests, Provencher, Dumoulin and Belcourt, whose memory was still fresh among the oldest Catholic inhabitants of Manitoba. Though he (Fr. Drummond) had not the advantage of a very long personal acquaintance with Father Considine, he had had unusual opportunities of seeing how highly he was esteemed and how warmly he was loved by his parishioners. The way in which the altar was tended by him showed how fully he realized that the Blessed Eucharist is the mainstay of a priestly life.

Father Lemieux, speaking as the rector of the cathedral and acting vicar-general, bore hearty testimony to the complete trust which the diocese of Fargo reposed in Father Considine.

In calling upon Father Kenny to speak next, Father Conaty said that Fathers Considine and Kenny reminded him of David and Jonathan or of Damon and Pythias; wherever you met one at any sacerdotal function, you were sure the other was not far off, they were inseparable. This Father Kenny laughingly corroborated,



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So long as he (Fr. Kenny) was at Grafton, only a few miles off, their frequent meetings were easy enough, but even now that he had moved to far away Cando, he was bound to keep up, as far as possible, their brotherly intercourse. Father Considine was a great one for praising his own parish and parishioners, but he (Fr. K.) could tell him that there was no finer place than Cando. Of course he wished Fr. Considine 25 more years of life, but he looked forward to their unbroken union on the hundredth anniversary of the jubilarian's ordination.

Father Geraghty, who was the next to be called upon, excused himself from any set speech and would merely say how heartily he congratulated Fr. Considine on his silver jubilee.

Dr. O'Keefe was then asked by Fr. Conaty to voice the sentiments of the laity. He did so, he said, very willingly, because he wanted to let the assembled clergy know that he and the rest of the parishioners had been