

# THE CATHOLIC ORDER OF FORESTERS.



To start an organization like the Catholic Order of Foresters, one of the necessary conditions for calling it into existence and making it a success is, that the wants of the people demand such a society; but even where the field is ripe for such a movement there must have been executive ability, generalship and judgment of men and things on the part of the men who established such a perfect organization, and whose history is made up of one continued success as the Catholic Order of Foresters, hence a sketch of the establishment and growth of the Catholic Foresters, with a sketch of the men who gave to the community such a valuable branch of Catholic benevolent organization must have more than passing interest to its members, if not to the general public.

The first meeting, that finally resulted in the establishing of the Catholic Order of Foresters, was held in the month of April, 1883, in the Sodality Hall, corner May and Eleventh streets, Holy Family (Jesuits) Parish, Chicago, Illinois.

The subject had been agitated some time by Mr. Thomas Taylor, and the holding of this meeting simply resulted in the conviction of the few gentlemen who were present that a necessity existed for a Catholic organization, based on the co-operative plan. About the first of May following another meeting was held, at which there was present Dr. F. W. Fitzgerald, John Conway, J. K. Clowry, M. Fleming, M. B. Bailey, James Graham, M. J. Dooley, J. F. Scanlan, Patrick Keane, Thomas Taylor, L. P. Dwyer and others, to the number of twenty or thirty; all seemed desirous of seeing such an organization, as above described, started, but few seemed to understand how to commence; the best methods of doing so was discussed pro and con, after which John F. Scanlan said, in the language of Horace Greeley, the way to start was to start, and moved that a Catholic benevolent association be established, and that a committee be named to secure a charter from the Secretary of State, and that said association be known as "The Illinois Catholic Order of Foresters." This motion was unanimously carried, and the following gentlemen were named as committee and as incorporators: John F. Scanlan, Michael B. Bailey, John K. Clowry, Patrick Keane, John J. Collins, Francis W. Fitzgerald, Mathew Fleming, and through the agency of these gentlemen, on the 24th of May, 1883, the State of Illinois issued the charter which brought the Catholic Order of Foresters into existence, for the objects as defined in application for said charter.

1. The name of such corporation is the ILLINOIS CATHOLIC ORDER OF FORESTERS.

2. The object for which it is formed is the promotion, fraternity, unity and true christian charity amongst its members. To establish a fund for the relief of sick and distressed members. To establish a widows' and orphans' benefit fund for the benefit of dependants of deceased members. No annual premium required. No money as profit or otherwise paid.

As soon as the charter was received, authority was issued for the organization of Courts, and almost immediately Court No. 1 was organized in the Holy Family Parish; Court No. 2, in Columbkil Parish; Court No. 3, in Sacred Heart Parish; Court No. 4, in St. Pius' Parish; Court No. 5, in the French Parish of Notre Dame, and the first Board of Directors was organized by the incorporators, adding to the number M. J. Dooley, John J. McCulloch, Michael Hart and J. V. L. Lemoine; John F. Scanlan was elected High Chief Ranger; J. V. L. Lemoine, Vice-High Chief Ranger; John McCulloch, High Secretary.

The work of organization went on apace, the members of the Board of Directors, as well as the members of the different newly-created Courts, devoted their evenings and Sundays to the work of organization.

The brother members of this now widely-extended Order, who can at this date go forth to organize subordinate Courts, with a record of benevolent work of nine years that has few equals within the Church, have but little idea of the labors required and the obstacles overcome by the pioneer Foresters who started this Order, with only their earnest hope and zealous faith to work upon; in rain or shine, morning, noon and night, the work of gathering the scattered few together went on, breathing confidence into the doubtful, urging forward the laggards, instructing the faithless, enlisting a man here and there, calling on this and that priest to gain their co-operation, and often receiving cold encouragement from those who should be enthusiastic. But, as the men who undertook this work knew no such word as fail, they brushed aside those who would not labor and went into the highways and byways of the different parishes, banding together the faithful few to bring as many Courts into existence as possible. Consequently, the men who bore the brunt of the work, who gave their time, and labored in this practical field of benevolence, deserve well of the Foresters, as well as of the entire Catholic community for the seed they planted; hence, the list of the workers in those early days should be collected, and their names honored in accordance with their work. We are only able to give a partial list; they appear in accordance with work they performed. Dr. F. W. Fitzgerald, whose spirit of discipline, and personal labors breathed life into the organization, discipline and respect into the medical department; J. V. L. Lemoine, James Graham, P. C. Harbour, N. P. Franchère, M. J. Gerthey, A. W.

Blouin, John Durkin, J. K. Clowry, J. P. Coan, John Foley, Michael Hart, James Kelly, Stephen Conley, John Comisky, John Griffin, P. L. Labbé, Edward Hayes, P. J. Eustace, Thomas Derane, Thomas O'Malley, James F. O'Neil, P. M. Clowry, Dr. F. S. Macdonald, Thos. H. Faulkner, James H. Roche. Of course, the High Chief Ranger necessarily was the general commanding, and was everywhere with advice and energy, breathing a spirit of organization, toleration and charity into all; this list would be incomplete if the name of Father Hayes, S.J., was left out, for though he never became a member, it was his kind and fatherly advice that led the organizers over many a rough road, and paved the way to getting the kindly approval and advice of His Grace the Right Rev. Archbishop Feehan. As the Order had no law-making power during the first seven months of its existence, the Board of Directors adopted the constitution and by-laws of Massachusetts Catholic Order of Foresters, as the laws to govern the Illinois Catholic Foresters, so far as they were applicable. Not only did the Order borrow the laws of our sister society, but we also drew upon the members of that very worthy Order for advice and instruction, which was responded to in a truly Catholic spirit.

At the close of the year 1883 the Catholic Order of Foresters had six Courts, with 245 members, hence it was deemed wise to hold the First Annual Session of the Order. The Board of Directors, bowing to this wish of the members, called upon the Courts to send delegates to said meeting, which was held in the Palmer House, Chicago, on December 27 and 28, 1884, which High Court Annual Session gave to the Order the first Constitution and By-Laws promulgated from their own law-making body.

The officers elected at that Annual Session were: John F. Scanlan, H.C.R.; J. V. L. Lemoine, H.V.C.R.; Dr. F. W. Fitzgerald, M.D., H.C.P.; John McCulloch, H. Sec.; Thos. Devine, H. Fin. Sec.; Michael Hart, H. Treas.; John Cumisky, John Griffin, John Durkin, P. L. Labbé, P. A. J. Maguire, Edward Hayes, Board Directors; E. S. Newman, S.C.; James Kelly, J.C.; Stephen Conley, I.S.; John Hickey, O.S.

From this time forth the Order grew with a prospect that gave satisfaction to the men who still labored with indefatigable zeal; several new members were added to the rank and file. St. James' Court No. 7 and St. Joseph's Court No. 8 brought a couple of hundred good practical workers into the field; soon came All Saints Court No. 9, who brought the Rev. Edward A. Kelly into the fold of Forestry, and few better or more earnest workers ever espoused a good cause than he; young, earnest and enthusiastic, he made the cause of the Foresters his personal mission, and made hosts of friends for the Order. Among his brother clergymen, his efforts to have the spirit of the Order thoroughly understood and fully appreciated, done much to clear away many of the objections that of necessity stand in the way of a young and untried organization in the Church, and thus one after another Courts were organized until the time when the Second Annual Meeting took place, at the Grand Pacific Hotel, January 29, 1885, where twenty-two Courts, representing close on 1,500 members, were present by representatives.

Seventy delegates, with the officers of the High Court, attended this Second Annual Session. Rev. M. J. Dorney officiated as Chaplain. Some new and necessary laws and rules were passed by this Convention, and the following officers were elected: John F. Scanlan, H.C.R.; J. V. L. Lemoine, H.V.C.; John V. McCulloch, H. Sec.; John C. Schubert, H. Fin. Sec.; P. M. Clowry, H. Treas.; F. W. Fitzgerald, H. Physician; Patrick Chambers, S.C.; M. G. O'Connor, J.C.; James Kelly, O.S.; Stephen Conley, I.S. After this Convention Archbishop Feehan appointed Very Rev. P. J. Conway, High Court Chaplain.

It was during this year, in January, 1884, nine months from the date of organization, that the first death occurred in St. Joseph's Court No. 8; the brother's name was John Lawlor; the Order had 846 members at that time, and the deceased's wife received \$846, being one dollar for each member in the Order at the date of his death; the next death was that of Edmond Condou, of St. James Court No. 7, in August, 1884, 940 members; the third death was Christopher Heaney, of St. Pius' Court, September, 1884, 960 members; and the fourth death was in November, 1884, Patrick Nowlan, of St. Joseph's Court No. 8, there being over 1,000 members in the Order, his heirs received the full \$1,000; since that time every member who died in good standing, to the number of nearly five hundred, has left to his heirs the full \$1,000 of the Order.

The third annual meeting of the High Court met at the Palmer House, Chicago, January, 28th, 1886, at which forty courts were represented by twenty-five delegates and High Court officers, the membership had grown to 2500, an increase during the year of 1,179 members. The officers elected at the third annual session were John F. Scanlan, H.C.; R. B. L. Lemoine, H.V.C.R.; Nicholas Wallenborn, H. Treas.; John V. McCulloch, H. Sec.; Dr. H. Fitzgerald, H.C. Physician; Board of Directors, Father J. J. Delaney, P. J. Cahill, N. P. Fennell, Dr. P. H. Cronin, A. Von Lesmer and John Kelley. The office of High Financial Secretary was abolished by this convention, and the duties of both secretaries merged into one High Secretary.

The fourth annual session of the Order was held at Ulich's

Hall, Chicago, Ills., June 1, 2, 3 and 4, 1887, as the time was changed by the last session, from January to June, and 230 delegates, alternates and High Court officers, representing fifty-nine courts, formed of 4,000 members, participated in the session. It was this fourth annual session that, on the advice of the H.C.R., gave authority to organize the Order outside the State. That move has proved productive of glorious results; the Order is now spreading its benevolent arms over almost the entire northern part of our continent. Many other good laws were passed, and it was at this annual session that the Holy Father recognized the good work of the Order by sending His blessings. The officers elected at the fourth annual session were John F. Scanlan, H.C.R.; John P. Lauth, H.V.C.R.; J. J. Dillon, H. Sec.; N. Wallenborn; H. Treas. Dr. J. W. Niles, H. M. Ex.; Board of Directors: A. Von Lesmer, Dr. P. H. Cronin, P. J. Cahill, Patrick Chambers, Rev. D. B. Looney, Nicholas Pauley, Stephen Conley, S.C.; Charles Langlois, J. C.; James Kelly, I. D.; Peter Shomer, O. S.

The fifth annual session of the Order assembled June 6th, 7th and 8th, 1888, in Ulich Hall, Chicago. Eighty-three courts were representing a net membership of 5,425; the total membership since the Order was started was 6,290; the number of expelled, suspended and dead, 402; the increase for the year 1892 being an average per month of 132 members. Much excellent legislation was enacted by this body of representatives, among which was the changing of the name from the Illinois Catholic Order of Foresters to the more cosmopolitan name of Catholic Order of Foresters. As this was the close of the official duties of the founder of the Order, Hon. John F. Scanlan, H.C.R., we deem it our duty to republish a part of his address to that session. It is good reading, full of wisdom, and can be read by the members with good results one hundred years from this time, and it certainly must prove beneficial to the delegates who have the honour of attending the first convention of the Order held in Canada.

"In the five years that I have had the honour of presiding as your chief executive, I have had an opportunity of seeing perhaps better than most of our members, the great possibilities of this organization. I would be less than human if the organization and the result of its work had not exalted my manhood. I believe I have been brought nearer to a higher life than I have ever reached before. I have tried to leave my faults behind, and do my duty from the standpoint of a man charged with the interest of a great mission. In doing my duty I may not have pleased all. In laying down my badge of office I desire forgiveness of those whom I have failed to please, it was the demand of duty not the individual that acted. It is difficult to please all, I have tried to do my duty as I understand it, and regret if it has not pleased every brother, but under the circumstances I would prefer duty to pleasing you individually.

When I assumed the duties of H.C.R. the Board of Directors constituted the Order. After five years I find a magnificent body of men, numbering 250, in this H.C., representing 83 Courts, nearly six thousand members, who with their families number over thirty thousand Catholics, united in the double bond of Catholic charity, and the brotherly love of the Order of Foresters.

It is indeed like a dream and nothing but the actual presence of you gentlemen of the H.C. causes me to realize in its fullness the work done and responsibility assumed.

Gentlemen, my labours in this Order has lifted me to a higher sphere than that of selfishness or ambition. Standing on the corner stone of this our Order, now I hope firmly established, I can see this majestic country, with its magnificent lakes and beautiful rivers, its verdant prairies and cloud-capped mountains, a country worthy of the hand-work of God, filled with a race of people that will, I trust, have all the virtues and few of the vices of all nationalities, a country and a race worthy of being embraced by the golden shackle of Catholicity.

Gentlemen, what part will the Catholic Foresters take in this truly benevolent crusade? I leave you to answer.

Associations can do much to hold up the hands of those who are called. You stand beneath the overhanging branch of that church, whose roots spring from the feet of Christ. Lift your minds and your hearts to the exalted mission in your hands, legislate in the spirit of Him who uttered the divine proclamation of human equality. "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." Turn your backs on the little imperfections of life. With your face towards the light, bear in mind how much there is to be done for humanity. Do each your part in this spirit, and I have no fear for the future of the Illinois Catholic Order Foresters."

It was during the last year of H.C.R. Scanlan's duties, that he prepared the way for planting the seed of Catholic Foresters in Canada by securing the able services and commissioning Bro. A. W. Blouin as Deputy High Chief Ranger for Canada. How wise was his selection; the large number of Courts in Canada speak louder than words.

The officers elected at the fifth annual session were: J. P. Lauth, H.C.R.; John O'Neil, H.V.C.R.; J. J. Dillon, Hon. Sec.; Nicholas Wallenborn, Hon. Treas.; Dr. J. W. Niles, H.M. Ex.; Board Directors: P. J. Cahill, N. P. Franchère, Patrick Chambers, Henry Detmer, J. W. Clancy, John Bednorz.