

CATHOLIC RECORD SOCIETY

Diocese of Columbus

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BISHOP SYLVESTER H. ROSECRANS

HOMILY AT CENTENNIAL MEMORIAL MASS, OCTOBER 21, 1978

By Bishop Clarence G. Issenmann, S.T.D.

"As for myself, when I came to you, I did not come proclaiming God's testimony with any particular eloquence or 'witness!...I determined that, while I was with you, I would speak of nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.... My message and my preaching have none of the persuasive force of 'wise' argumentation, but the convincing power of the spirit. As a consequence, your Faith rests not on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (I Cor. ii, 1-5).

The Diocese of Columbus, as initially established in 1867 and its present boundaries since 1944, has given its first Bishop Sylvester Horton Rosecrans the cradle, episcopal throne and the grave.

Bishop Rosecrans was a native Ohioan, born in 1827 at Homer in Licking County, one of the Diocese's 23 counties of the 88 in Ohio. Drawn to the Catholic Faith, encouraged by the words and example of his brother, William, who later became known as the Civil War General Rosecrans, Sylvester received his First Holy Communion on Christmas of 1846, in the chapel of the U. S. Military Academy, of West Point.

Again it was his brother William who gave brotherly advice to think and pray about what Sylvester planned to do with his life and work. Father, mother and brother readily consented to his vocation to be a priest; his father encouraging his son's decision to be a priest in his native Ohio by applying to the Diocese of Cincinnati.

Bishop Purcell sent the young Rosecrans to Rome for his seminary studies. He experienced the turbulent years of the wartime struggle for Rome, when even the Pope, Gregory IX, fled the city for safety Nov. 24, 1848. Bishop Rosecrans witnessed the Pope's return to Rome on April 12, 1850. Bishop Rosecrans was ordained priest in Rome in 1852, and returned to take up his assigned priestly work in Cincinnati.

Meanwhile, as early as 1846, the then Bishop Purcell has asked for help, in the form of a coadjutor, Father James Frederick Wood, whom he lost later to Philadelphia as coadjutor. Archbishop Purcell tried again in 1858 for a coadjutor. His recommendation was Father Sylvester Rosecrans, whom the Archbishop had got to know and recognize better the qualities of his character and valued his trust and loyalty and obedience.

The Bishops of the Province of Cincinnati acted on this petition by telling Archbishop Purcell, already 25 years in Cincinnati, that he was too

young to give up, and that Father Rosecrans was too young to preside as coadjutor!

The provincial meeting of the Bishops in 1861 repeated the same stand, yet a year later in 1862 Archbishop Purcell got his wanted help in Bishop Rosecrans as his Auxiliary.

Their association in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati was to last only six years. The relation became that of Archbishop and suffragan. While Auxiliary, Bishop Rosecrans had come to Columbus in 1867 as pastor of St. Patrick's, one of the few parishes then in Columbus, and became in turn Columbus' first resident Bishop on May 3, 1868.

His ten and a half years as chief shepherd of the third Diocese of Ohio climaxed in the dedication of the new Cathedral under the patronage of St. Joseph on October 20, 1868. We may all well picture the joyful realization of that day changing into the mournful loss of its first Bishop, stricken on the afternoon at Vespers on the Sunday of dedication, called to his eternal reward the day following, and interred on Friday of the same week of dedication, in the Cathedral crypt beneath the sanctuary, where his mortal remains await the call on the day of Judgement.

Today, on this October 21, 1978, this first day of the second centenary of the dedication of the Cathedral, this Memorial Mass is a fitting spiritual tribute to its builder and first pastor as Ordinary of the Diocese.

Initial beginnings usually are difficult and offer their share of hardships and sacrifices, which at the same time unite more closely in the common goal of attainment. This was true of the infant years of the Diocese. Numbers of the Faith and material wealth and resources were not great.

In Bishop Rosecrans' report to his people, describing the progress of the Cathedral construction up to 1872: "The means wherewith we have been able to proceed for four years, that is, from 1868 to 1872, without suspension, have been supplied by subscription, fairs, donations from private persons outside the Diocese, collections throughout the Diocese and loans.

"Much has been borrowed, also; but we doubt not the Providence of God, who having carried us thus far, will not fail to finish the work.....What remains to be paid on the Cathedral is much indeed. But what has been paid exceeds by far the most sanguine hopes we dared to entertain four years ago."

As late as the end of the century, after the second Bishop Watterson died in 1899, it was proposed either to suppress the Diocese, dividing its territory between the Dioceses of Cincinnati and Cleveland, or to give it new boundaries, owing to the debt and the small number of Catholics. We thank God that the decision was to continue this third Diocese in Ohio, and the See of Columbus.

In our lifetime we have witnessed and are sharing in a tremendous development in this See city, which has made it the second city of the State. If the first Bishop compared the Columbus of 100 years ago to the Columbus of today, we may well imagine his amazement.

Around this Cathedral today there is scarcely anything recognizable of 100 years ago. Most noticeable is the dwarfing of St. Joseph's Cathedral by towering multi-storied buildings almost surrounding it on every side. Nonetheless, Bishop Rosecrans would see his Cathedral as the one recognizable heritage of a century past. It stands in its external sturdiness of stone, proclaiming a daily lesson of the one worth-while value of life, God's eternal and unchanging verities to lead us to our heavenly destiny with Him. St. Joseph's Cathedral remains as firmly founded, as is the Faith that it signifies and proclaims, in the midst of our modern age, as Bishop Rosecrans preached and taught and labored to lead to Jesus Christ and Him crucified and resurrected and ascended.

The Bishop is the spiritual leader in his Diocese. His identity is with Christ. As all created human beings, the Bishop is first a man of God, a child of God through Faith and Baptism. But a Bishop stands before all the Diocese as even more, because he is the accredited visible representative of Christ, Lord, Redeemer and Savior, in communion with the visible Vicar of Christ, the Pope, Bishop of Rome, who called him to be united with him in the apostolic succession of the Apostles, and entrusted with a designated portion of the Kingdom of God on earth.

If we hold in honor him who is the representative of God's religion, it is because this honor rightly due to God Himself, is reflected on him who is His chosen servant. In God's hierarchical society, the Bishop bridges the gap between heaven and earth, the visible mediator between God and his fellowmen, of whom he is one. The Bishop is the Pontiff par excellence. No fellowman can take his place, may truthfully dare. In this confidence Bishop Rosecrans had no hesitation in the Faith of priests, religious and faithful, who had seen and accepted him as a parish pastor in their midst, and who now welcomed him in this exalted dignity as their chief pastor and Bishop of their Diocese.

The responsibilities now were greater, going beyond his former parish and city to the boundaries of the whole Diocese. The mission of the Church, founded by the Lord Christ, is ever fundamentally the same - to save souls. There was the same need to preach the Gospel, as it was committed to the Church, the Apostles and their successors. The Good News must be brought to all, in its totality and purity of Christ's teaching, adapted in language to its hearers, as Pope John XXIII, almost 100 years later in his opening talk to the Second Vatican Council, called for the evangelizing of God's truth in the idiom of the hearers.

Our spiritual needs ever remain the same in all ages. The need of the Church on earth, equally necessarily to supply for these spiritual needs, remains the same - to teach God's truth, to invite fidelity to God's Will, to provide God's grace leading us back to God, our eternal destiny. Through the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops, the Lord Christ provided for all future time and ages on earth.

In Christ's divinely established Church on earth, the Bishop holds a key position. The axiom, Ubi Petrus, ibi ecclesia, holds true for the entire Church, and within narrower limits, the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ubi episcopus, ibi communitas catholica, is equally true of a Bishop as spiritual leader of the faithful in his Diocese. In the language of the Church the Bishop is Sacerdos Magnus, the visible shadow of Our Lord, the great High Priest.

As the other Apostles were Peter's associates, always dependent upon Peter, so the successors of Peter, the Popes, address their encyclical letters to the Bishops not merely as delegates, but as associates, calling them "Venerable Brethren."

The Bishop has power over the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church visible, and over Christ's real, true, and substantial Body in the Holy Eucharist. St. Thomas teaches that in his Diocese the Bishop is the head of the apostolate, nothing may be done in relation to this mission without the Bishop's initiative, approval or consent. The Bishop is the teacher of God's truth. He is the source of grace under God. He is charged with the sanctity of all under him, to lead them back to God.

The Bishop's work is to assure the continuity of Christ's Church and its mission on earth - the generation of grace in Baptism, the conservation of grace through the sacraments, and the spiritual growth, yes, even the numerical increase of this supernatural life of grace in souls, especially through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The day before ordination, June 4, 1852, Bishop Rosecrans wrote in his Journal in Rome: "Tomorrow the Holy Ghost will descend upon me, and I shall receive in all its fulness the terrible power over the Mystical and Real Body of Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost will descend upon me, as upon the Apostles in the Supper Room, and I shall be transformed."

This realization of the sublime exaltation of the priest in Faith and devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is expressed 30 years later in his report of 1872 about the Cathedral: "We do not deny that we have sometimes felt misgivings about the solidity and costliness of the work for which we made ourselves responsible. . . . But the work was for God. The dwelling was for the MOST HOLY SACRAMENT. He forgot Himself for us. Should we not forget ourselves for Him? He spent more on us than we were worth. Should we fear to spend our all on Him? It is a House for God, not for men. . . . At the door all distinctions will vanish, and the Master greets all alike."

"Your Faith rests not on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." We pray that the place in this Cathedral of the mortal sign of Bishop Rosecrans presence among us may continue to enshrine his memory with us, and his priestly soul long since be in eternal union with his Lord and God. May he be at peace!

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HOLY CROSS: COLUMBUS' FIRST PARISH

SOME HISTORICAL NOTES

By Monsignor Joseph A. Hakel
(Continued)

After ten years of brilliant and zealous service at Holy Cross Church, Father Borgess was transferred to the Cathedral in Cincinnati on May 5, 1859. He was Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati from 1860 to 1870. He was elected to the Titular See of Calydon on Feb. 14, 1870, and appointed Coadjutor Bishop with the right of succession and Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Detroit. Bishop Borgess was consecrated in Cincinnati on April 24, 1870, by Bishop Sylvester

H. Rosecrans of Columbus assisted by Bishop John H. Luers of Fort Wayne and Bishop Patrick A. Feehan of Nashville. Bishop Borgess succeeded to the See of Detroit on Dec. 30, 1871. During his administration, Catholicity progressed rapidly in the whole of Michigan and the system of Catholic schools was expanded. He attended the Fourth Provincial Council of Cincinnati in 1882, and the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884. He opened his Diocesan Preparatory Seminary in Monroe, Michigan, on Sept. 5, 1886. He also founded the Borgess Hospital of Kalamazoo, a home for the maimed and afflicted. The serious condition of his health forced him to resign on April 16, 1887, and take up residence at Cottage Grove, Wayne County, Michigan. During a visit to Kalamazoo, Bishop Borgess died suddenly of apoplexy on May 3, 1891. He is buried in Detroit. Holy Cross is proud to have had as pastor a man of such devoted and self-sacrificing service to God in the salvation of souls.

On May 5, 1859, Rev. John Bernard Hemsteger was appointed pastor of Holy Cross Church by Archbishop Purcell of Cincinnati. Father Hemsteger was born on Sept. 25, 1827, in Alt Schermbeck, Westphalia, Germany, the son of John Joseph and Anna Catherine Hemsteger. He went to school in Germany until 1851 when his family emigrated to America. He immediately entered Mt. St. Mary of the West Seminary in Cincinnati where he completed his seminary studies. On Oct. 15, 1853, he was ordained deacon, and on March 12, 1854, he was ordained priest by Archbishop Purcell. His first assignment was in Piqua as assistant to the pastor of the English congregation. During his five years in Piqua, he founded the German parish and there built the church which was later converted into the school house. In 1859 he was transferred to Holy Cross Church in Columbus where he remained until his death in 1878. His first task was the building of a new rectory. Before his promotion to Cincinnati Father Borgess had been planning a new rectory. Father Hemsteger carried out his plans and erected the present large priest's house which was completed in 1861 at a cost of \$8,500.00.

During the Civil War years, necessary improvements were made in Holy Cross Church. There were 4,000 parishioners and the church accommodated only 400 worshipers. Even with an assistant priest and four Sunday Masses, the church was overcrowded. The choir loft was enlarged to seat 200 persons. New doorways were installed and the choir stairway was enclosed. The church interior was painted.

Father Hemsteger was assisted during his pastorate by the following priests: Rev. Francis Karel, Rev. Caspar Wiese, Rev. Jacob Rosswog (a relative of Msgr. Hakel's grandmother), Rev. Bernard Selig, Rev. Francis X. Specht, Rev. George H. Ahrens (future pastor of Holy Cross), Rev. John B. Eis, Rev. J. C. Goldschmidt, Rev. A. Weber and Rev. Clement R. Rhode.

In 1863 there were 407 children in the old school building. As soon as the Civil War was over, plans were made for a new school. First of all more ground was needed. On March 28, 1866, the lot east of the church, 31 by 187½ feet extending from Rich to Walnut Street, was bought from Thomas Agnew for \$4,000.00. English Alley next to the Agnew property was vacated from Rich to Walnut Street and moved east on Jan. 28, 1867. The vacated land was given to Holy Cross by the City. This provided more space for building the new school and for enlarging the church.

Mindful of the spiritual needs of his growing parish, Father Hemsteger established the Children of Mary and the St. Aloysius Societies in April 11, 1869. These societies became the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Altar Society which still exist today.

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The period of Catholic church expansion coincided with the Civil War, 1861 to 1865. On April 12, 1861, Fort Sumter was bombarded and the war began. President Lincoln called for the mobilization of troops. Service in the army was by voluntary enlistment. Columbus immediately became the center of extraordinary activity and excitement. Not only volunteers but also contractors, office seekers, and adventurers rushed to the State Capital from all directions. Every train brought crowds until hotels, boarding houses and streets swarmed with strangers.

When the volunteers began to arrive no provision had been made to feed and house them. They came in civilian clothes and had no uniforms. Barracks for 6,000 men were hastily constructed at Camp Jackson. The State Legislature appropriated money for arms, food, uniforms and equipment. The patriotic women of Columbus organized the Soldiers' Aid Society. Columbus City Council voted money for the relief of families of volunteers. Employers promised employees their former jobs back after their return from the war.

On May 28, 1861, work began on a new National Camp of 160 acres four miles west of Columbus. It was called Camp Chase. Hospitals for the wounded were opened. Captured Confederate soldiers were imprisoned at Camp Chase. Ohio Soldiers in the Civil War numbered 310,654. Of these 11,237 were killed in action, 6,567 were left dead on the battlefield and 13,354 died of diseases contracted in the war.

On Palm Sunday, April 9, 1865, the Civil War ended. The news reached Columbus that evening. People swarmed from the churches, hotels and homes and a great, loud shouting expressed the people's joy. A general celebration took place on Good Friday, April 14, with ringing of bells, blowing of whistles and firing of cannon. Thanksgiving services were held in all the churches. People flocked to the East Terrace of the State House for the official ceremony. In the evening the whole city was illuminated. The State Capital gleamed with lights from the ground to the cupola. A torch light parade was held with bands and marching soldiers.

The next day, Holy Saturday, the news of the assassination of President Lincoln shocked the whole city and the nation. On April 29, the body of the President arrived in Columbus and impressive services were held in the Rotunda of the Capital. In spite of the sorrow and fears of war, the decade, 1860 to 1870, continued to be a period of prosperity and tremendous expansion in Columbus.

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The decade, 1860 to 1870, saw stirring events in and around Holy Cross Parish. In 1865 the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis leased Starling Medical College at Sixth and State Streets and renamed it St. Francis Hospital. The Sisters with the help of Father Hemsteger had done heroic work during the Civil War caring for the sick and wounded at their little 24-bed hospital across from Holy Cross Church.

Father Hemsteger in cooperation with Father Edward Fitzgerald, pastor of St. Patrick Parish, assisted the Sisters by raising money at a "Fair" to help pay for the lease and needed hospital improvements. Father Fitzgerald also helped the Sisters of the Good Shepherd to secure a permanent location in Columbus, first on Spring Street in 1865, then at Sandusky and Broad Streets in 1866. During the Civil War, Father Fitzgerald showed his patriotism by flying the Union Flag from the tower of St. Patrick Church. He promoted the organization of the Irish Catholic Company, the Montgomery Guards, who were among the first to volunteer for service. He frequently administered to sick and dying soldiers and prisoners at Camp Chase.

Father Fitzgerald was also the originator of plans for a new, more centrally located parish to relieve the overcrowding at St. Patrick's and at Holy Cross. Land was bought at Fifth and Broad Streets and the cornerstone of St. Joseph Church was laid on Nov. 11, 1866, by Bishop Sylvester H. Rosecrans, Auxiliary Bishop of Cincinnati. In December, 1886, Father Fitzgerald received notification that he was appointed Bishop of Little Rock, Arkansas. On Feb. 26, 1867, Bishop Rosecrans was appointed pastor of St. Patrick Church by Archbishop Purcell of Cincinnati. On March 3, 1868, Bishop Rosecrans was named first Bishop of the new Diocese of Columbus. St. Patrick Church became the Pro-Cathedral while St. Joseph's was being constructed. Father Hemsteger was appointed Vicar General of the Columbus Diocese.

Some idea of the rapid growth of the Catholic Church in the United States can be gathered from the fact that in 1868 fifteen bishops were appointed, twelve of them on March 3, and nine new dioceses erected: Columbus in Ohio; Wilmington in Delaware; Harrisburg and Scranton in Pennsylvania; Rochester in New York, Green Bay and La Crosse in Wisconsin; St. Joseph (now Kansas City-St. Joseph) in Missouri and Grass Valley (now Sacramento) in California. Meanwhile plans for the new Holy Cross School were progressing.

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In spite of the fact that new parishes were established, St. Patrick in 1851 and St. Mary in 1865, the number of children in Holy Cross School taxed the capacity of the old church building which was still being used as a school.

In 1863 the German Catholics in the southern part of Columbus felt the need of a church in their own area. A lot of one and a half acres, the present site of St. Mary's Parish, was bought by a committee of Holy Cross parishioners. In 1864 Father Francis X. Specht, assistant at Holy Cross, was placed in charge of the new parish. A school was built and occupied in 1865 to accommodate the overflow enrollment of Holy Cross School. In 1866 work was begun on the church and in August of 1866 Archbishop Purcell laid the cornerstone. On November 29, 1868, St. Mary's Church was dedicated by Bishop Sylvester H. Rosecrans, the first Bishop of the newly established Diocese of Columbus.

In 1865 the Catholics of Columbus bought Mt. Calvary Cemetery, 27 acres on Harrisburg Pike, one and a half miles beyond the city limits. In 1866 Holy Cross congregation bought the north half of the cemetery for \$300.00. The first caretaker was Anton Witzigmann. He was succeeded by Henry Igel who died on August 6, 1940. Henry Igel was succeeded by his son, Fred H. Igel, who is still active in the care of Mt. Calvary Cemetery. The faithful services of these three dedicated men covers a period of 112 years.

Finally, in 1866 preparations were begun for the construction of a new Holy Cross School.

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Early in 1870 plans were drawn for the new Holy Cross School by Charles Woelfel. Under the direction of the Very Reverend John B. Hemsteger, Vicar General and Pastor of Holy Cross, the building was erected at a cost of \$18,000. The contractor was Michael Harding; the plasterers were Charles Nagle and Michael Meers; the painter was John Mosely; the brick mason was Adam Becker.

Work progressed rapidly and Holy Cross School was dedicated on August 20, 1870, by Bishop Rosecrans with a grand celebration by the Church Societies. School opened with an enrollment of about 300 pupils.

The school is a three-story structure with seven classrooms and a large auditorium. The classrooms measure 27 by 32 feet and 13 feet high, and the auditorium 32 by 54 feet and 15 feet high. There is a full basement. The three classrooms on the first floor were for the boys, and the three on the second floor for the girls. The third floor had a classroom for the upper grades and an auditorium complete with stage and settings for plays, lectures, concerts, etc. Until 1952 there was a double stairway, one for the boys and one for the girls. The playground was divided by a high fence with the girls on the east end of the lot, and the boys near the Rectory under the watchful eye of the pastor.

The building was heated by forced air piped through gratings. The restrooms were the usual outdoor facility. Gas lights furnished the illumination. There was a well and pump for water. Teachers, besides the Sisters of Notre Dame, were, in 1861, Louis Bolander and Miss Lang; in 1862, John H. Sturm and J. Bailey; then J. Lobmueller and J. Vogel; finally, in 1872, Joseph Fuchs and Mr. Frick. By 1872 there were 177 girls and 149 boys in Holy Cross School, a total of 326 pupils. At the same time St. Patrick School had 530 pupils.

(To be continued)

Acquisitions and Gifts

The Crisis, Columbus, Ohio. Microfilm. Publication of Governor Medary in Columbus during the Civil War period, Jan. 31, 1861, to January 25, 1865. Gift of Francis P. Clark, The Library, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana.

Monthly Calendar, Sacred Heart Church, Columbus, Ohio. January, 1920, to December 3, 1939. Gift of Bishop Hettinger.

Picture of the interior of the former Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, Glouster, Ohio, May 1896. Gift of Father Robert Harwick.

Columbus Maennerchor, a Return to Yesterday. 125 Anniversary Book, October, 1973. Gift of Monsignor Joseph A. Hakel.

Handwritten letter of Bishop Rosecrans to Father J. C. Goldschmidt, dated January 5, 1875. Gift of Monsignor William E. Kappes.

Dedication Booklet, Our Lady of Peace Church, Columbus, Ohio, December 10, 1967. Gift of Father Robert Noon.

A Gateway to the Priesthood, 1829-1929, Mt. St. Mary of the West Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio. Gift of Bishop Hettinger.

Sermon by Bishop Michael J. Ready on the occasion of his installation as Bishop of Columbus, St. Joseph Cathedral, January 4, 1945. Gift of Monsignor James Kulp.

(To be continued)