

The Diocesan Pattern in Iowa

Bishop Hennessy, 1865-1900

A protracted era of growth and expansion in the Iowa Catholic Church coincided with the long years of the spiritual reign of Bishop John Hennessy who succeeded Bishop Smyth to the see of Dubuque. Bishop Hennessy, born in Ireland but educated in America, had been a seminary president and a prominent parish priest in Missouri before his arrival in Iowa. During post-Civil War times immigration reached a flood tide, and many Irish and Germans coming to Iowa rapidly increased the number of Catholics.

In the sense of not having the problem of a complex human melting pot, the Church in Iowa was indeed fortunate. While other sections of the nation, especially the East, were to be inundated in the coming decades until World War I with the myriads from scores of foreign countries with diverse languages, customs, and national backgrounds, in some instances so confusing as to be almost insoluble problems to the sorely perplexed bishops, Iowa drew as its major Catholic sources only from Ireland and the German lands. With the cessation of immigration almost forty years ago the membership of the Iowa Church has become almost entirely native-born today.

To meet this rapid growth in numbers Bishop Hennessy brought into his diocese Irish and German clergymen to such an extent that for a time they easily outnumbered the American priests. The Iowa Church — as yet unbuilt though already so vastly peopled — had at first, as the reader must have observed, to rely largely on European volunteer priests; men who, meriting many sorts of praise, do not merit in many cases that of having understood American principles and ideas. Their influence (historically comprehensible considering what was happening in Europe) showed in an aversion to the customs of the Republic, and often in the determined segregation of national groups from the ordinary current of American life.

A zealous protagonist of the parochial school system, the indefatigable churchman John Hennessy directed his principal energies to Christian education. Wherever possible, from the Mississippi across to the Missouri, schools were built and heroic sacrifices were made to the end that every Catholic child should be educated in Catholic schools. Considerable and continued opposition was offered by some Catholics, not only for economic reasons, but because they considered the program an attack on the public schools.

That this program of Bishop Hennessy succeeded so well was due in great measure to his phenomenal ability in inducing various teaching

sisterhoods to come to Iowa to take over the rapidly expanding number of schools. At his silver jubilee celebration as a bishop in 1891, he stated in a public address: "Twenty-five years ago . . . there were no schools worth speaking of. In Ottumwa, Muscatine, Davenport, Des Moines and Dubuque; these are the only cities that I can remember in which there were schools conducted by Sisters." Those few nuns whom he found then were soon augmented by new orders of teachers. Three of the more prominent of these orders may be mentioned here. The Sisters of Mercy first came to De Witt and Davenport. Today, besides teaching numerous schools, they conduct a number of hospitals throughout the state. From Ireland in 1874 came the Presentation nuns who have shown a vigorous growth since their arrival in Iowa. And in 1875 there appeared in Iowa City a little band of religious ladies who had been exiled from Germany. They had previously been hospital sisters, who, after having nursed the wounded on the battlefields of the Austro-Prussian and Franco-German wars and having been awarded the Iron Cross by the Empress Augusta, were expelled during the persecution of Chancellor Bismarck. Today the schools of these Franciscan Sisters of Dubuque adorn the entire state.

The Dubuque diocesan college, temporarily closed during the Civil War, was reopened and successfully continued by Bishop Hennessy, and

much credit belongs to him for his courage and faith. Since there were numerous college casualties everywhere during the Civil War, the loss of the only Catholic institution of higher learning in Iowa was by no means singular. It would have been surprising had the third bishop of Dubuque, consecrated in the Dubuque Cathedral on September 30, 1866, allowed the diocesan institution to die and be forgotten. For the third chancellor of Dubuque College was made of sterner stuff. John Hennessy as a boy in his native Limerick had had his heart inflamed with a love for Christian learning by the old-fashioned Irish schoolmasters who had been his tutors in the Classics. Little wonder that the *Twenty-Ninth Annual Catalogue of St. Joseph's College* (1901-1902), gives September 8, 1873, as the date of the founding of St. Joseph's College by Bishop Hennessy.

This flame for Christian teaching burned fiercer during John Hennessy's maturer years. In the Third Plenary Council of the American bishops held at Baltimore in 1894, he was the strongest advocate of the parochial school system, even in the face of powerful opposition. There is a strong current tradition that John Hennessy was the deciding influence that committed the Catholic Church in the United States to its present policy in this regard.

It was under Bishop Hennessy that hospitals, orphans' homes, and other asylums were erected

at various points in the diocese. In 1881 the southern half of Iowa was separated from the see of Dubuque and formed into the new diocese of Davenport. Yet — for such was the growth of Catholicity in Iowa — in 1893 the recently reduced diocese of Dubuque was elevated to the status of an archdiocese with Davenport, Omaha, Wichita, and Sioux Falls as its suffragan sees. During succeeding years various other dioceses in other states were suffragan to Dubuque, but today that archdiocese has as its only suffragans the three other dioceses in Iowa — Davenport, Sioux City, and Des Moines.

The Archdiocese of Dubuque

At John Hennessy's death in 1900, his successor as archbishop of Dubuque was John Joseph Keane, formerly rector of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D. C. Hardly had this cultured churchman been installed when the western half of his see was cut away to form the new diocese of Sioux City. After eleven years of active service, during which time his zeal for total abstinence made him a marked foe of the liquor traffic, he resigned and was succeeded as archbishop in 1911 by his namesake, James John Keane, formerly bishop of Cheyenne.

Archbishop James Keane was the first American-born churchman to preside over the see of Dubuque. Reared on a Minnesota farm and later

in life president of St. Thomas College in St. Paul, he venerated the traditions of Loras and Cretin and made a successful essay at applying their practical wisdom to the problems of the western Church. On the splendid foundations laid by his predecessors in the Dubuque diocese, he expanded the charitable and school activities of his church and, above all, put the Dubuque diocesan college on a solid financial and academic basis. Although the United States had entered World War I in 1917, Archbishop Keane launched and successfully completed an endowment campaign for the college of over a million dollars, and later received \$200,000 more from the Rockefeller Foundation.

With the great growth of this college in students and in numbers it was decided to name it "Dubuque College." As Julien Dubuque, the city's founder, had been a Catholic, and as the college itself had been since 1839 the institution of higher education of the diocese of Dubuque, it was quite natural that this name should be the one chosen and inserted in the new articles of incorporation early in the year 1914. But this name in a few years brought about a unique and interesting series of complications. The Dubuque German College, originally a Presbyterian seminary for the education of ministerial students, and for a long time known as the German Presbyterian Theological Seminary of the Northwest, had stated in its own incorporation instrument that it was to have

three departments known respectively as Dubuque seminary, Dubuque college, and Dubuque academy. This, according to its president, brought about confusion and conflict because the chartered name of the Dubuque diocesan college was Dubuque College.

The disagreement of the two institutions over their claims to the name of "Dubuque College" was accentuated at this time by the almost fierce athletic rivalry that prevailed, as both colleges for several years boasted of athletic clubs that ranked among the finest in the West. The dispute was finally brought into the courts and one of the most interesting legal cases in the history of Iowa ensued. The "Dubuque College Name Case," as it was known, promised to take classic rank with the famous Dartmouth College case of Daniel Webster's day. Formidable batteries of legal talent faced each other in forensic debate. From the sublime oratorical flights reminiscent of Webster's immortal words, "It is a small college, sir, but there are those that love it," the descent to the comical was accomplished by an argument over a barrel of sauerkraut addressed to "Dubuque College" and which had been shunted back and forth between the kitchens of the two institutions, vainly seeking a welcome haven. The diocesan college was victorious in the district court, but the Iowa Supreme Court, to which the case was appealed, stated that a retrial was necessary. At this point

CATHOLIC HIGHER CLERGY IN IOWA TODAY



Archbishop Leo Binz
Dubuque Coadjutor
1951-



Archbishop Henry P.
Rohlfman
See of Dubuque
1946-



Bishop Loras T. Lane
Auxiliary Bishop, Dubuque
1951-



Bishop Ralph L. Hayes
Davenport
1944-



Bishop Joseph M. Mueller
Sioux City
1948-



Bishop Edward T. Daly
Des Moines
1948-

SOME OUTSTANDING IOWA CATHOLIC LAYMEN



Martin J. Wade
Iowa City
Federal Judge
Southern Iowa District



R. Louis Murphy
Dubuque
U. S. Senator
1933-1936



William F. Riley
Des Moines
Federal Judge
Southern Iowa District

matters were temporarily halted, and finally, after mature deliberation, a friendly decision was reached through compromise by the two institutions, each agreeing to avoid any title in which "Dubuque" and "College" were in juxtaposition. The Dubuque German College dropped the word "College" and went under the appellation of the University of Dubuque. The diocesan institution, wishing to retain its status as a college, chose the name of Columbia College, which was later changed to the name it has since been known by, the name of its illustrious founder, Loras College.

Archbishop Francis J. L. Beckman, formerly bishop of Lincoln, Nebraska, succeeded to the see of Dubuque in 1930 following the death of James Keane the previous year. It was under his initiative that the archdiocese from July, 1937, to July, 1938, celebrated with various functions, civic, ecclesiastical, and social, the hundredth birthday of its organization by Rome. Among the many church dignitaries present at the functions may be mentioned the apostolic delegate to the United States, Archbishop Amleto Cicognani; and among the statesmen who spoke at the centennial celebrations were the United States Secretary of Agriculture, later Vice President, Henry A. Wallace, United States Senator Clyde L. Herring, and Governor Nelson G. Kraschel of Iowa.

Archbishop Beckman drew the national spotlight before World War II because of his partici-

pation in America First, a noninterventionist movement, but, once war was declared, he became exceedingly active in its successful prosecution. He sent as chaplains into the armed forces more than forty of his diocesan priests, a higher percentage than from any other diocese in the United States. Resigning at the end of 1946 because of age and ill health, Archbishop Beckman died less than two years later.

His archiepiscopal successor was the Most Rev. Henry P. Rohlman, who had been his coadjutor for two years and who previously for seventeen years had been bishop of Davenport. Besides the establishment of new parishes and the enlargement of Loras College, one of the outstanding achievements of Archbishop Rohlman has been the erection of a large and magnificent orphans' home near Dubuque. In January of 1951 Archbishop Leo Binz, previously bishop of Winona, Minnesota, arrived in the diocese to assume the office of coadjutor to the archbishop of Dubuque. In 1946 Edward A. Fitzgerald had been appointed auxiliary bishop of Dubuque and served in this capacity until he became bishop of Winona in 1950. In 1951 another auxiliary bishop, Loras T. Lane, was consecrated.

The Diocese of Davenport

Due to the tide of Catholic immigration, it was decided in Rome to divide the state of Iowa into

two dioceses, and on May 8, 1881, the southern half of the state, embracing the four southern tiers of counties, was erected into the episcopal see of Davenport. At this time the new diocese contained seventy priests and a Catholic population estimated at 45,000. John McMullen served as its first bishop for only two years, 1881 to 1883. Dedicated to the cause of higher Catholic education, he firmly founded St. Ambrose College at Davenport before he died.

His successor was the first native-born American to serve as a bishop in Iowa and was the only American-born bishop until the year 1911. Henry Cosgrove, an alumnus of Loras College at Dubuque, for twenty-two years guided the religious destinies of his diocese with skillful zeal, the longest episcopal reign in Davenport up to the present time. At his death in 1906 he was followed by Bishop James Davis who for two years previously had acted as coadjutor bishop. It was during Bishop Davis' regime that — in 1911 — the western half of southern Iowa was severed from the Davenport jurisdiction and erected into the new diocese of Des Moines. Shortly before Bishop Davis' death, which occurred in December of 1926, he had been given as his auxiliary bishop, Edward D. Howard, formerly president of Loras College at Dubuque, and today presiding as the archbishop of Portland, Oregon.

In 1927 Henry P. Rohlman was consecrated as

the fourth bishop of Davenport. When, after an active episcopal career of seventeen years, he was appointed coadjutor-archbishop of Dubuque in 1944, he was succeeded by the present incumbent, Bishop Ralph L. Hayes. Bishop Hayes had served previously as rector of the North American College in Rome and as bishop of Helena, Montana.

It should be noted that under all these bishops the diocesan college, St. Ambrose, grew slowly but steadily into one of the foremost Catholic colleges of the nation and is one of the very few which has a department of agriculture in its curriculum. In the Davenport diocese there are also three colleges for women: Marycrest College at Davenport, Mount St. Clare's College at Clinton, and Ottumwa Heights College at Ottumwa, the last two being junior colleges.

The Diocese of Sioux City

This diocese comprises the twenty-four counties of northwestern Iowa that were separated from the archdiocese of Dubuque to form an episcopal see of their own. Although the establishment of this diocese was provided for in the papal bull appointing the former rector of the Catholic University at Washington, D. C., John J. Keane, to the archbishopric of Dubuque on July 24, 1900, the Sioux City diocese was not actually erected until January 15, 1902. Philip J. Garrigan, who had been the first vice-rector of the Catholic Uni-

versity and had occupied that office for fourteen years, became the first bishop. His successor, Bishop Edmund T. Heelan, held spiritual sway for almost thirty years — from 1919 to 1948. Previous to his death he had enjoyed the assistance of two coadjutors: Bishop Thomas L. Noa for one year, who then became bishop of Marquette, Michigan; and Bishop Joseph M. Mueller, also for one year, who now occupies the diocesan seat.

In the course of the half century's vigorous life of the Sioux City diocese, several attempts were made to maintain a Catholic men's college — Trinity College was its name while it existed — but all efforts failed. However, a woman's college, Briar Cliff, with but little more than a score of years to measure its existence, has shown a remarkable progress in numbers of students and in scholastic attainments.

The Diocese of Des Moines

The youngest — it may be added, as far as the number of Catholic inhabitants is concerned — and the smallest of the four dioceses of Iowa is that of Des Moines. This diocese, established in August of 1911, comprises roughly the southwest quarter of the state of Iowa, an area of about 12,500 square miles. Its first bishop was the New England scholar, Austin Dowling, appointed in January of 1912. Exactly seven years later he was

promoted to the archbishopric of St. Paul. His successors were Bishop Thomas Drumm who died in 1933, and Bishop Gerald T. Bergan, who in 1948 was elevated to the archiepiscopal dignity of the Omaha see. The present "ordinary" of Des Moines, as the presiding prelate of a diocese is referred to ecclesiastically, is Bishop Edward T. Daly, of the Order of Preachers, namely, a Dominican. Since the days of Samuel Charles Mazuchelli, missionary and pioneer church builder, this is the first time a son of St. Dominic is playing an influential part in the church activities of the state, and it is also the first time in history, with the sole and singular exception of the Trappist monk, Clement Smyth, chosen bishop of Dubuque almost a century ago, that a member of a religious order was appointed to the episcopal honors in any of the four dioceses of Iowa.

M. M. HOFFMAN