

Notre Dame, Indiana
November 22, 1923

My dear Brothers,

I feel it my duty to write you of the last hours of our Saintly Brother Columba and of the events of the past two days. I shall make no attempt to keep this in order. It will be but number of statements just as the thoughts come to me.

His was a very peaceful death. Our men had taken turns watching with him for a number of nights. As I went there day after day it was easily seen that he was gradually going. The last three days he went very fast. Father Gallagher brought him Communion Tuesday morning and was standing over him with the Host raised on high when he passed away. His lips were too tightly closed to give him Communion. He was conscious up to the very last, never complained, never asked for anything except just what was necessary.

News of his death soon spread to the people in South bend and vicinity and dozens of the members of the Community, Sisters and strangers were there to view the body before it was even in the casket. For the past two days and nights the parlor in the Community House has been a veritable shrine. He looked so peaceful, so happy it was very difficult to say prayers for him and I am convinced that thousands of petitions were made to him where but hundreds were said for him. The members of the Community were all there, the Sisters from St. Mary's, from the kitchen, the hospital, the schools. All who were able to walk or ride were at his bier. The professors from the college, students and strangers all made their pilgrimage. One had to wait in line for his turn to enter the room or get near the remains. They came with their beads, their badges, their medals, cards, and trinkets and all were applied to his hands and face. The high and the low, the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned all became as little children in his presence. Not one entered and went away without carrying some precious article that had for him become a real treasure because it had touched the body of one of the holy ones of God. I have talked with a number of the members of the Community this afternoon and all express the same sentiments; "It all seems like a dream, a part of the ages that we felt was in the dim past." They did not stop with this. They came with handkerchiefs, yards of cloth and ribbon. We sent to Chicago and purchased all the Sacred Heart badges in the City and yards upon yards of goods. Three of us stood there for over a half-hour applying the badges a dozen at a time. These will be kept to be given to the members of the Community.

I am enclosing a number of badges for the members of the house-own personal use. I placed the names on the same and applied personally-each on separately in the name of the person whose name was on the badge and at the same time I prayed that our good Brother might obtain the graces or blessings the wearer might request.

What can be said of the funeral? It was a Community funeral, as grand as could be arranged with visitors from the vicinity and even from distant parts. I will not speak of the sermon of Father provincial. It will have to read in order to be appreciated fully. I shall send a copy of this as soon as it appears in print. The casket was opened at the grave that other friends might view the remains and one more the procession came. Old and young, rich and poor they came forward

and placed their articles on his body and these same articles became relics to be handed down from generation to generation. You may call it sentiment or whatever you like but could you have witnessed that sight I am sure the memory of it would remain fresh until the end of your days. To see such men as Father Bolger, Father Haggerty, Father Hugh O'Donnell go forward and place their beads upon his withered hands would convince a man that here was something beyond the power of man to describe. Members from Moreau, the Seminary, Novitiate and Dujarie they all have their treasures today and all have others to send to their parents.

The world and the strangers were anxious to hear about his miracles but it seemed to me that the members of the Community thought little of these things during these days. They meditated upon his life, they took into account the sacrifices he had made, his example of humility, love of neighbor, confidence in God, lively faith, devotion to the Sacred Heart, life of prayer, of poverty etc. etc. and all realized that in these was found the secret of his sanctity.

His remains have been conveyed to the earth but there is no question but what his work will continue. If in his lifetime he was powerful in obtaining assistance for us what can be said of his power tonight when he is resting close to the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord? He spent his life in promoting this devotion to the Sacred Heart, the Sacred Heart has surely been very good to us as a Community and as individual members and it now remains for us to but increase that devotion in ourselves and spread the same to those in our charge.

Let us not forget to thank Almighty God for having given us such a member as Brother Columba: What an honor for our Community to produce such a saintly character..what an honor for each of us to belong to a Community that is capable of producing such members. Many orders much larger than ours cannot boast of such.. Why is it all? The answer is found in the text of the sermon: "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart."

We may never be able to perform the wonderful cures attributed to him but all that amounts to but little. He is enjoying the Beatific Vision this night because he was a faithful member of Holy Cross. Each one of us will have the same opportunity. Let us follow his example.

Yours in the Sacred Heart

B. I.

(Brother Isidore Alderton, C.S.C.)