

thousand years with Him are as a day, and He will not suffer His holy ones to see corruption.

The body of our beloved Brother Columba will be laid to rest in our little community cemetery, a body worn by toil and by secret suffering and by long nightly vigils nursing the sick. His soul, we trust already free to face with God. And we are minded as we lay him down to well-earned rest of that great company of simple hardworking religious who like himself desired only the last and lowest place. He goes to join Brother Alfred, the bricklayer, who raised the walls of this very church, and Brother Neil and Brother Augustus who went from their tailor's bench to Paradise, and Brother Charles the good carpenter who built for himself an anchorhold in heaven, and Brother Augustine, the excellent baker, upon whose death the venerable Father Sorin wrote one of his most charming and beautiful circular letters. Ah, there is a host of these shining spirits before the throne of God! Spiritually and materially they have been pillars of our community life. They are the true mediaevalists in a modern day which has lost that sense of eternity, the soul of the ages of faith. We cannot but mourn their passing and pray God to raise up others in their stead. Praise and appreciation of them is no reflection on priests and brothers whose labor has been that of teaching and perfecting and directing the work of others. Simply, this latter kind of work has full human recognition. But the lowly religious at his work-bench, happy though he is in the peace of his hidden life, seldom finds, as he seldom seeks, rewards that are short of eternal beatitude.

And this is the reward we ask for our beloved dead this morning. Our words are carried on the winds away. All is vanity except to love God and serve Him only. Opinions of men are changing fashions, fame does not long survive, even the reputation of holiness may grow dim and drift into oblivion. God alone endures, and the immortal spirit of man. Over this good and holy religious are said the prayers that are offered for all departed Christians, be they saint or sinner. The rest is with God. There is only one future for us all, not a future of time, for that is nothing, but the future that is eternity. Towards that we are hurrying. God grant we may learn from this humble and noble life to give their proper value to all the things that concern us till the things concerning us have reached their end. Have they reached their end or rather only a more glorious beginning in the death of Brother Columba? We do not know. We do know we leave him safe in the keeping of the Sacred Heart. May he rest in peace, and Blessed be God in His Saints.

I am, my dear Fathers and Brothers,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

CHARLES L. O'DONNELL, C. S. C.

J. M. J.

CONGREGATION OF HOLY CROSS

Notre Dame, Indiana, November 22, 1923.

Circular Letter of the Reverend Provincial.

REVEREND FATHERS AND DEAR BROTHERS:

God has called our Brother Columba to his rich reward. We have just come from laying him to rest in the community cemetery. Never, perhaps, in the annals of our Congregation has there been such a funeral. There was no vain pomp and show. It was a simple burial, yet it was graced with unforgettably touching occurrences, about it was shed an atmosphere that whispered of heaven, and round it will grow the holiest memories. A great stalwart son of Holy Cross has been called home. There is joy in paradise, and we on earth rejoice too, at the same time that we realize our tremendous loss. Who is there to take his place among us? The question is not single only. Who, we are moved to ask, is to take the place of the men of his type, the grand old type of working Brother in our community? They have been the salt of our community life. There is not one of us but knows this and is happy to recognize it on his knees. When all our philosophy comes to an end about the place and relative importance of our various religious activities, we can take off our hat to the splendor of a life that realizes in actual practice our finest theories of religious service. We pass from saint to saint, until we come to Saint Joseph, and our lips are mute. Him we pay the perfect tribute of the veneration that is silence.

I can not think, nor do I believe any one of us will admit, that the glorious line of working Brothers is destined to become extinct in our community. They have an integral place in our life and work. This would not be so, if there were not always a class of men to whom this life should make its appeal. Surely there are laborers, waiting to be called into our vineyard. I take occasion of Brother Columba's passing and the reflections it impels, to ask all our religious to make a special prayer for this intention, that vocations like his may increase in number. A community, we may say in all humility, which has nurtured a Brother Columba may ask God to entrust to it other subjects like him. And in addition to prayer, let each of us, according to his opportunity, do all in his power to bring these vocations to Holy Cross and keep them there. Obviously, nobody realizes more keenly than myself how great our need is of priests and teaching Brothers. In all departments there is a shortage of men. At a time like this, however, it is natural to think of our shortage in a particular department. I venture to send to all our religious,

as part of this letter, the sermon which was preached at the funeral of Brother Columba this morning:

"Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

I am sure that if the dead could speak, it is something happy he would say. He was so wise and so sincere, his humanity was so broad, his piety was so plain and practical,—it is difficult to see how even the great change which death is could much alter the man we knew. With all his wisdom and his years, he was but a simple, good child, and he fell asleep, a tired child, in the arms of God. It must be that if he could tell us something of what he knows further than we know, it would be a glad word and sure that all is well, that our faith and hope are fulfilled, and charity faileth not. In his own bright and original way he would say this, from a vantage which must be close to the Sacred Heart.

What a wonderful thing, my friends, this funeral is! To the eyes of the world we gather merely about the mortal remains of an old man whose life was of no great moment, no special service to his fellowman. His no distinction of birth, or wealth, or education, as the world sees it. He wrote nothing, he discovered nothing, he invented nothing, he contributed nothing to the progress of mankind. He was a shoemaker by day, and sometimes a nurse by night. Yet his name was known to thousands, many of whom came in the course of a year to visit him; the notice of his death is carried by the public press throughout the land, and the religious family of which he was a member unites to give him all the honor within our power to bestow. For the past two days the faithful in a constant stream have approached his bier and touched their rosaries and medals to his hands, or stood in rapt devotion, looking at his plain and peaceful face.

What is the secret of this distinction, what is the heart of this mystery? Is it our sentiment and credulity, or was there rather something in him and his life to awaken and warrant this high regard? The answer is not a new one, as the terms of the problem itself are familiar in the history of God's men. There is a distinction that is moral and spiritual. It is the highest of all distinctions and it is attainable by the lowliest, nay, it is reached only by those who have learned of Christ to be meek and humble of heart. And such a one was our Brother Columba, and of such is the kingdom of heaven.

His story, of which the world would make so little, is a story of divine romance. A club-footed child, the son of poor parents, he received scant schooling, working at an early age in the coal mines of Pennsylvania. The doors of opportunity were closed to him, all but one. His parents at the outset of his career, could give him only one key, but it was the key to the kingdom of heaven; it was the faith that St. Patrick brought to Ireland, and St. Columba nourished, and that thousands of the Irish race kept when all else was lost. And with that inheritance the young lad in the coal mines of Pennsylvania was rich. Whatever his social or physical disabilities, he could move along the best of the ages, and his crippled feet need not stumble on the road to heaven.

It was early evident, that was the road he must travel. From the age of fourteen, he said himself, he felt a special call to serve God in religion. But not till twelve years later were his footsteps guided, through strange and devious ways, guided he believed by the

direction of the Blessed Virgin, to Notre Dame and Holy Cross. And here for nearly fifty years he had no doubts he had come where God wanted him to be. He offered himself to go on the foreign missions, he offered himself to go to Molokai to assist Father Damien among the lepers. Superiors assigned him to work in the shoeshop as the community cobbler. And there he remained and worked till in the course of time and the providence of God the cobbler's shop itself became a shrine. The humble shoemaker had somehow learned to mend immortal souls.

The process of his learning is not all mystery. "Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart," said One whose words were all that mattered to the Brother shoemaker. St. Joseph, his special patron, lived and died a carpenter. The son of God Himself sanctified manual labor by laboring. High purpose, great intention can accompany simple action, and lo! the story is told. Who shall fathom the depth of his union with God in those hours of common work, far away from the false values of the world? What lessons he learned from the Divine Master that gave a sanction and a power to his own example and his words when later the world made a pathway to his door! The day came when the obscurity of this hidden life was brought to an end, and the simple working Brother shed a lustre all his own on surroundings that were by many other claims distinguished.

If he did not actually initiate at Notre Dame, he strongly and actively promoted devotion to the Sacred Heart, a devotion which thirty-three years ago had not the general favor it has now. His efforts were crowned with a peculiar success. He lived to see, as he said only a few days ago on his deathbed, he lived to see all Notre Dame a shrine of the Sacred Heart. The Blessed Virgin and the Sacred Heart were never separated in his own devotion. He made with his own hands and distributed thirty thousand badges of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Great works are sometimes very simple in the mode of their realization. It somehow came to him that the badge of the Sacred Heart could be the vehicle of the devotion itself. It is interesting to note in the life of St. Margaret Mary, to whom this special devotion was first revealed as an apostolate, that from the very start her great concern was for an image that could be put in circulation, and it is interesting to note further that the earliest clients of the Sacred Heart, at Paray-le-Monial, two hundred and fifty years ago, carried about their person little images of the Sacred Heart.

It is not my purpose to discuss in detail Brother Columba's Apostolate of devotion to the Sacred Heart. It was his life. Within the past year he said, with the humorous simplicity which kept him so sane and human, "I'll be dying one of these days, and may be they'll be putting something about me in *The Scholastic*. You can tell them to say there was an old shoemaker at Notre Dame, and he had a devotion to the Sacred Heart, and there seem to have been some cures." In those few words he wrote his autobiography. "Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart." Some may think it timidity, some may regard it as the characteristic conservatism of religious and ecclesiastical authority that there was never an official investigation of these apparently supernatural results. Be that as it may, the good he did cannot be undone, nor his life un-lived, nor the glory of the servants of God perish, nor the works of God come to naught. A