

Bishop William T. McCarty, C.Ss.R. Papers

Baltimore Province of the Redemptorists Archives

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The scope of the papers of Bishop William T. McCarty, C.Ss.R., a member of the Baltimore Province of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, encompasses letters, manuscripts (including memoirs), notebooks, articles, news clippings, and photographs, dating from c. 1889 to as late as 1973, the year following his death. The collection is especially important—however partial—for research on the history of the Catholic Church in Rapid City, South Dakota, and for his activities as the Military Delegate. Of particular interest are the numbers of items related to the Indian missions. The entirety of the collection is open to qualified researchers. Consultation of these materials will be at the discretion of the Province Archivist.

Biography:

William Tiburtus (sometimes Tiburtius; in his own autobiography it is Tiburtus) McCarty was born August 11, 1889, on a farm a short distance from Crossingville, Pennsylvania, to Timothy C. and Margaret (né Burns) McCarty. At birth he weighed a mere 3 pounds and the midwife baptized him on the spot. The next Sunday, however, a more formal, though conditional, baptism took place in the Church of St. Philip in Crossingville, where his parents had been married in September 1875. He was the third and last of the couple's three children, which included Maryanne and Frank. Three brothers predeceased William—John, Jeremiah, and James—all of whom died in infancy. From 1880 until her death in 1891, his mother was an invalid who could barely get out of bed. William's father also died while he was still a child; his father succumbing when he was only four. The surviving children were cared for by relatives thereafter. He attended parochial school at St. Callistus, Kane, Pennsylvania, under the direction of Benedictine Sisters, and public school at North Girard, Pennsylvania, before entering the juvenate at North East. As a young man, McCarty felt an initial vocation after hearing Father Charles Nolan, C.Ss.R., preach a mission at St. John's Church in Girard. He pursued the normal course at North East, beginning on August 28, 1903. He entered the novitiate at Ilchester, Maryland in June 1909 and took the habit on August 2, 1910. He later studied at Mount St. Alphonsus, Esopus, New York, completing his studies in July 1916. The future bishop was ordained a priest on June 10, 1915, by John Cardinal Farley of New York.

After a period of teaching, first at North East (1916-1917) and then at Esopus (1918-1930; prefect of students, 1926-1930), he did parochial work (1930-1933) as assistant rector of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the "Mission Church," in the Roxbury section of the City of Boston. He was rector of Mt. St. Alphonsus, Esopus, from 1933 to 1939. From 1939 to 1943, he was provincial of the Eastern Province of the Redemptorists. In that role, he directed fourteen new foundations in the United States, Puerto Rico, Brazil and Paraguay. He traveled extensively, making visitations in South America. He was superior of 764 Redemptorists, including 547 priests, 96 brothers, 94 seminarians, and 27 novices.

Bishop McCarty was elected to the Titular See of Anaea January 2, 1943 (the announcement coming a few days later) and was given an appointment to the Military Ordinariate, in which he served for four years, basing himself at St. Cecelia's in Spanish Harlem. In this capacity he served under the direction of New York's Francis Cardinal Spellman, who was the Military Ordinary during the whole of the World War. Spellman consecrated the new delegate a bishop in St. Patrick's Cathedral on January 25, 1943,

and Bishop Thomas Molloy of Brooklyn and Bishop John O'Hara, C.S.C., served as co-consecrators. The Annals from St. Cecelia's records that the vast cathedral was "crowded to the doors." As a gift of his episcopal stature, Spellman called McCarty into the parlor of the Archbishop's residence and presented McCarty with a tray of rings. "Pick one," he said, and McCarty chose a large emerald that once belonged to Cardinal Patrick Hayes. Spellman offered McCarty one of his own pectoral crosses, which had been a gift from Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli who was then Pope Pius XII. Both the ring and the cross were discovered missing when the bishop's home in Rapid City was burglarized. The ceremony at St. Patrick's was attended by forty other members of the hierarchy. McCarty's own vestments on this day were previously worn by both Spellman and Pacelli on the day of their own respective elevations to the episcopate.

On April 10, 1947, McCarty was notified of his appointment as Coadjutor Bishop of Rapid City, South Dakota, with right of succession. Spellman later installed McCarty in that city's Cathedral. For the installation, Spellman was assisted at the altar by Bishop Thomas Molloy of Brooklyn and Bishop John O'Hara, CSC, titular bishop of Mylasa and military delegate. Less than two months later, Bishop McCarty found himself as co-consecrator of fellow Redemptorist Bishop James McManus, in the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Brooklyn on July 1, 1947. McCarty assumed control of the Diocese of Rapid City from Bishop John J. Lawler, who died on March 11, 1948.

The Rapid City Diocese, formerly the Diocese of Lead, was established by Pope Pius X on August 4, 1902. The name was changed to the Diocese of Rapid City in 1930. At the time of his election to that see, it comprised 43,000 square miles in twenty-three counties of western South Dakota. At the time of McCarty's retirement the territory held a population of 187,231 people, including 42,000 Catholics—10,000 of whom were Catholics of the Sioux nation. Among them he was known as a chief with the title "Wamblee Wakita" (Watching Eagle). The Church was served by 100 priests, 13 brothers, and 166 sisters. Actually, the numbers of clergy at the end of his tenure represents a slight decline in personnel from when he ascended to the see. In 1969, there were 108 diocesan clergy and 30 regular clergy. He oversaw the building of St. Martin's Academy and Junior College, in conjunction with the Benedictine Sisters, and the promotion of the Mother Butler Center in Rapid City, which served the spiritual, physical, and health needs of the Native Americans of the diocese. Arguably the crown jewel of his episcopate was the erection of the new Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, whose cornerstone was laid on Easter Sunday, 1961 and whose dedication was made on May 7, 1963. On May 31, 1965, shortly before the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, Bishop McCarty was named an assistant at the Pontifical Throne by Pope Paul VI, and this was announced his anniversary on June 10. He attended all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council, though his input into the conciliar proceedings was minimal. He did, however, preach before the American hierarchy in the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome on the second night of the triduum honoring the newly beatified Bishop John Nepomucene Neumann of Philadelphia.

In 1966, having reached the age of 75, Bishop McCarty offered the Holy Father his resignation, but it was declined. McCarty was too robust to retire and indeed, in a talk before the students at North East in May 1968, he lamented that of the nine men ordained in his class of 1915, only he remained. Finally, on September 17, 1969, it was announced by Archbishop Luigi Raimondi, the Apostolic Delegate in the United States, that Pope Paul VI accepted Bishop McCarty's resignation. At age 80, Bishop McCarty was transferred to the Titular See of Rotden, September 11, 1969, which he later resigned as well on January 13, 1971. He was succeeded at Rapid City by Monsignor Harold J. Dimmering of St. Cloud, Minnesota, though McCarty continued as administrator of the Diocese until Dimmering was installed. McCarty continued to live in Rapid City until his death on September 14, 1972. He was accompanied in his last

moments by his confrere, Father Adam Otterbein, the Province Secretary, who was at Rapid City on business. He was a priest for over 57 years and a bishop for nearly three decades. Monsignor Bernard Drew, a priest of Rapid City who had attended the Bishop in his last 18 months, wrote to Father James Galvin, C.Ss.R., that “a golden lettered chapter in the annals of the Congregation has now closed.” McCarty was buried from the Cathedral he built in Rapid City and finally interred at Esopus, per his wish, on October 21, 1972. On the casket was a Sioux horse blanket which served as the pall, a symbol of baptismal unity with Christ, the Church, and the people he loved.