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In the Shadow of Archbishop John Ireland: Langdon Thomas Grace, O.P., Second Bishop of St. Paul

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Enthusiastic Reception, Grateful Response

The appointment to St. Paul apparently was received with gusto by many in America. Yet an element of sorrow on losing a much-respected member of the clergy pervaded the streets of Memphis. Father Grace had “gained the esteem of the whole community, which he left only with the greatest reluctance.” Reflecting on Grace’s reluctance and hesitancy to accept this bishopric, O’Connell offers the following insights:

For a Catholic priest to have won such plaudits in a southern city where the nativist movement had flourished during the 1850s was no mean accomplishment, and it may have led Father Grace to respond without enthusiasm to the call of the north; or perhaps he envisioned the upper reaches of the Mississippi Valley as frozen wastes, inhabited only by primitives.²⁹

His parishioners expressed their warm admiration for their departing pastor with the following words:

Your zeal, your example, and your eloquence have done much to awaken and preserve the faith of those entrusted to your pastoral care, and to command the respect of our fellow citizens who are not of our communion.³⁰

The secular press of the city was almost unanimous in its tributes of praise for his work

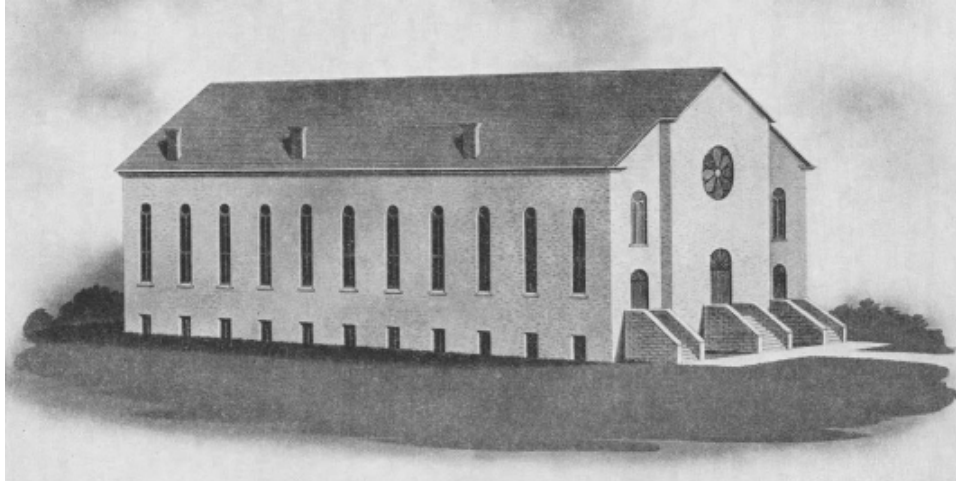
and sorrow for his leaving. His sermon on Sunday, July 17, 1859, was his farewell to his parishioners and to the city. O’Daniel remarks that “there was not a dry eye in the crowded church.” Writing later to friends in Memphis, Grace expressed his deep feelings for the people of Memphis in the following way:

It is no small alleviation of the pain of separation from a place which I had begun to regard as a permanent home, and in which there is so much to endear me, that my leaving has given occasion to an expression of feeling toward me by the Protestant as well as the Catholic community of Memphis, which I could hardly imagine to have existed.³¹

Two days following his farewell sermon, he boarded a boat for the trip up the river to St. Louis, where his episcopal consecration would take place. He was consecrated in the cathedral on July 24, 1859 by Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick. An assisting prelate was Grace’s fellow Dominican, Richard Pius Miles, the aged bishop of Nashville whom Father Grace had served in Memphis.

Northward on the Mighty Mississippi

Following his consecration, the new bishop continued his trip up the Mississippi River for St. Paul, arriving on July 29. Stritch wrote that



St. Paul Cathedral, its third, when Bishop Grace arrived.

“most reluctantly he left his beloved Memphis and went upriver just about as far as one can, on the steamship *Memphis Belle*, to his new home.”³² The new bishop was met “with extraordinary marks of reverential welcome.”³³ One who had witnessed the arrival of Bishop Grace in St. Paul wrote: “(Bishop Grace received) a heartfelt, enthusiastic welcome, such a one as would prove that our hearts are not the colder for a residence in the northern clime.”³⁴ The evening of his arrival, Bishop Grace participated in pontifical vespers at the small but crowded cathedral.

The bishop found that his diocese had about fifty thousand Roman Catholics with a clerical population of only twenty-seven. Obviously there was much work to be undertaken. John Gilmary Shea wrote the following about Bishop Grace’s first few months in St. Paul:

He entered at once on his duties, studying the condition of his diocese. He addressed his clergy and people in a touching pastoral, on the 9th of November, urging fidelity to their religion, and the use and diffusion of good books and papers.³⁵

In an attempt to solve the problem of a short supply of clergy, like many American bishops of the time, Grace began to cultivate his Irish connections in search of more vocations. He wrote letters continually throughout the 1860s

seeking Irish priests willing to undertake religious work in his diocese, especially to All Hallows College in Dublin. The extent of his desperation is noted in the following letter:

The wants of the missions in Minnesota are probably greater than in any part of the United States, (due) to the sudden influx of a very large immigration into a wild region that has scarcely yet been reclaimed from the tribes of roaming savages.³⁶

A Cultivated Personality

Bishop Grace’s engaging manner was noted by the authorities in Rome at the time of his appointment as bishop of St. Paul. “He is described as a courteous, temperate, and pious man, eloquent and worthy He is known to have gained the good opinion of all.”³⁷ O’Connell provides the following description of the personality of Grace during his early days as bishop:

Grace . . . was a portly, round-faced man whose small-lensed spectacles gave him a permanently startled expression, to which a corona of frizzed hair thick around a balding pate added a somewhat Pickwickian flavor. His placid temperament belied a shrewd and discerning mind. Moreover, his extended European experience lent Grace a cosmopolitan and scholarly air, which he wore with unaffected ease all of his life and which

stood him in good stead among his various frontier constituencies.

Such an aura would have profited Grace little in a rough-and-tumble world had he not been a genuinely cultivated man. In his case, reputation did not outrun fact. Thomas Grace displayed a refinement, a polish, an elegance of manner and speech that helped earn him the regard of his contemporaries....

There was nothing flashy about him. On the contrary, his strength lay in the careful, understated manner in which he fulfilled the humdrum obligations of his office. He was cautious, balanced, always civil, never hasty in his judgments. Above all, he possessed a serene appreciation of his own worth, which kept him preserved from the least pang of jealousy. The success of others did not trouble or threaten Thomas Grace.³⁸

As a native southerner now bishop of St. Paul, it is not strange to discover that some of the citizens started questioning Grace's patriotism as the War Between the States began in earnest. Grace's thirteen-year stint in Memphis only added fuel to the fire of queries about his devotion to the northern cause during this divisive time. Grace did assign his future successor, John Ireland, to serve as a chaplain in the Union army regiments from Minnesota. Furthermore, he preached on issues relevant to the preservation of the Union during the time of the South's secession.

At the time of the calling of the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1866, Bishop Grace could report that there existed seventy-two churches in his diocese staffed by some forty-three priests.³⁹

Desiring to ensure that John Ireland would stay in St. Paul, Bishop Grace resigned from the bishopric in 1884, which was the twenty-fifth anniversary year of his consecration. A celebration took place recognizing his service. Bishop John Lancaster Spalding of Peoria preached the homily on this joyous occasion. With his retirement Grace had expressed the wish

to return to St. Rose Priory in Springfield, Kentucky. Yet Ireland needed Grace to assist him in running the Diocese of St. Paul, so Ireland secured a prescript from Rome commanding Grace to remain in St. Paul and assist him. Grace dutifully obeyed. In 1888, Grace was made titular Archbishop of Siunia; hence, he became known as "Archbishop Grace."⁴⁰

Connections with St. Joseph's Province

While away from his religious home in the Province of St. Joseph for most of his priestly life, nonetheless Grace appears to have had some connections with his friar brothers in Ohio and Kentucky. In 1878, he arranged to give Holy Rosary Church in Minneapolis to his Dominican brothers. This provided the Dominicans with a foothold in the northern mid-western states. One of the stalwart Dominicans stationed there early on was a former provincial, Stephen Byrne, who was greatly interested in the American colonization movement. This movement assisted immigrants, especially the Irish, to leave the slum conditions of many northern cities and resettle in the farmlands of the great prairie states. Archbishop Ireland also supported this movement enthusiastically. Another firm supporter of the colonization project was the Jesuit Father Thomas Sherman, son of General W. T. Sherman. Between the death of Bishop Rosecrans in Columbus and the naming of Bishop Watterson to replace him, Bishop Grace served as the ordaining prelate of a young Dominican who had completed his clerical training at Somerset. There is a photograph in O'Connell's book illustrating Bishop Grace with the priests of his diocese gathered for their annual retreat in 1871. A Dominican friar, Emile Dalmatius Reville, O.P., is prominent in the photograph. This would suggest that Grace had maintained connections on the spiritual level with his confreres in the Province of St. Joseph.

When Father Alemany was appointed Bishop of Monterey while in Rome, he had the pope annul the prescriptions of the earlier

Provincial council meeting, which had been rather harsh to Alemany's leadership during his time as provincial. Alemany had written into this edict the proposition that Grace and Mazzuchelli would have votes for life in all future chapters of the province. It is unclear whether Grace exercised this option.

In the 1890s Grace came into conflict with the nominal leader of the province, the forceful Lawrence Francis Kearney. The issue was over disputed land in Memphis, which dispute went back nearly half a century to Grace's time as pastor of St. Peter's. When asked to recall events from his days in Memphis, the aged archbishop appeared to side with the Franciscans, whose parish was adjacent to the Dominican parish of St. Peter's. Kearney was disdainful of Grace's claims. Kearney, responding to the worry of his provincial that he was not holding the Dominican Archbishop in due respect, wrote the following: "To my mind, he deserves nothing but the contempt and scorn of every Dominican."⁴¹ Kearney's attitude may explain why the aged Archbishop did not return to a house of his province, especially St. Rose, when such a predisposition appears to have been on his mind as he began to advance in age.

This encounter with Kearney's quick temper is indeed unfortunate. It does appear that Grace initiated the Franciscan claim against his fellow Dominicans concerning the property in Memphis. That this outraged Kearney—and caused him much undue administrative hassle—is obvious. Grace "was afflicted . . . during the last years of his life, by the cruelest of spiritual maladies, scrupulosity." One can easily conjecture that in a moment of extreme scrupulosity, Grace worried that as pastor of St. Peter's he had been part of an event that was not completely honest with the Franciscan Fathers who had developed the adjoining parish. The extent of these scruples is seen by the fact that prior to his death Grace wrote to the Apostolic Delegate requesting permission to be relieved from the priestly obligation to recite the daily

breviary. Grace wrote, "I am now eighty-two years of age and I have difficulty in reciting the divine office owing to my mind becoming feeble and the painful annoyance of scruples."⁴² It is sad indeed to witness a strong administrator, committed priest and bishop become almost incapacitated with these scruples. Nonetheless, this may explain the onset of his concern about the Franciscan Fathers in Memphis that resulted in his being almost cast adrift by Kearney.

The Catholic University of America

Archbishop Grace appears to have been a staunch supporter of the foundation of the Catholic University in Washington, D.C. That this was a divisive issue among the American hierarchy is well known. The documents suggest that Grace supported this concept wholeheartedly. Discussions on the foundation of the Catholic University were part of a hot topic at the Third Plenary Council. A Jesuit, Father Fulton, argued vehemently against the proposal. The future Bishop of Nashville, Thomas Byrne, responded point by point to Fulton's position. Stritch comments on Grace's part in this debate with the following words:

Byrne was . . . touched by the commendation of old Archbishop Grace of St. Paul, the former pastor of St. Peter's in Memphis, who met him with warm assent as he came down from the rostrum.⁴³

At the preliminary meetings to discuss the agenda for the Council, it was Bishop Grace who, at least as one voice, raised the issue of the establishment of a major national Catholic university. The Archbishop of Milwaukee wrote to Cardinal Gibbons of Grace's support:

The proposition for a "Catholic University" or rather for a higher "Seminary for Philosophy and Theology" has been made by Rt. Rev. Grace, without having much support from the majority of the Bishops.⁴⁴

In 1888, Archbishop Grace wrote to Father Larroca, his Master General in Rome, informing

him that there was some discussion among his fellow members of the American hierarchy that the proposed chair in Thomistic Philosophy for Catholic University be given to a Friar-Preacher. Grace urged him to give his approval for this request. Grace, with a statement indicating that he had not forgotten his roots with the American Dominicans even though he had been a member of the hierarchy for nearly thirty years, noted that such an appointment would “spread the fame of the order in America.” Furthermore, Grace urged that the Master General endorse the plans of the American province to establish the proposed House of Studies in Washington. Grace wrote:

There is neither a system nor a regular course of studies in any of our houses in the United States. Our students do not advance beyond the rudiments, they receive only superficial instruction in philosophy and theology and there seems to be no hope of a change. Indeed, there is only one professor or lector in each convent to teach all branches of sacred science.⁴⁵

Interestingly enough, the Dominican provincial of the time, Father Francis Aloysius Spencer, was of the same mind.⁴⁶ He too requested that the Master General send a European Lector to the U.S. However, what happened was the reversal of any such plan. Larroca asked that the Americans send one of their recently educated Lectors to the University of Fribourg in Switzerland! One did eventually go to Europe. Spencer also urged that the new House of Studies be constructed in Washington near the campus of the Catholic University. This project did occur eventually, but it was Fr. Kearney who, as provincial, got this program off the drawing boards and on the ground; it was dedicated in 1904. Kearney was a far-sighted and adventurous leader; it was under his auspices that the American Dominicans returned to secular education with the establishment of St. Patrick’s College in Columbus in 1905.

What his letters suggest, however, is that Grace had not forgotten his own intellectual

training in Europe at mid-century. Hence, even though as bishop he may have sided with Alemany and Mazzuchelli on the need for missionary priests, he had not abandoned altogether the requirement to nurture the intellectual life as appropriate to Dominican clerics. Grace probably would have supported Kearney’s ambitious move establishing St. Patrick’s College, but this event occurred eight years after Grace’s death.

The Last Days of Langdon Thomas Grace

During this latter period of his life, Archbishop Grace resided in rooms at St. Thomas College and Seminary near the banks of the Mississippi in St. Paul. In the fall of 1896, he journeyed south to visit the city of his first pastorate, Memphis. He also went to St. Rose Priory in Kentucky to visit the novitiate and the place where he was received into the Dominican Order sixty-six years earlier. It is not known whether he also visited Somerset at this time.

Grace returned to St. Paul from his sojourn in time to celebrate Christmas. During the winter of 1897, he was taken seriously ill and died on February 22, 1897. He was buried in the episcopal vault of Calvary Cemetery in St. Paul. O’Connell notes that: “By a curious coincidence it was forty years to the day since the death of Joseph Cretin.”⁴⁷ Cretin was Grace’s predecessor as the first bishop of St. Paul. Archbishop Grace had served his successor, John Ireland, for a dozen years following his retirement after a quarter of a century as the bishop of St. Paul.

NOTES

Dominican Father John Gerlach kindly informed me about Father James Reardon’s impressive *The Catholic Church in the Diocese of St. Paul*. In addition, Fr. Gerlach provided a copy of *The Pastoral Letters of Bishop Thomas Langdon Grace*, compiled by former bishop of New Ulm, Raymond A. Lucker. Father Gerlach has been a thoughtful and generous supporter of this project; he himself is hard at work on the second volume

of the massive history of the American Dominicans that is the product of Project OPUS. Father Ambrose McAlister of Providence College continues to be of immense assistance to the author as he undertakes the writing of these accounts. Father Luke Tancrell offered valuable historical suggestions as this narrative was in its early stages. Marianne Lisska continues her auspicious work as the author's principal and valued proofreader.

- 29) O'Connell, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.
- 30) O'Connell, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
- 31) *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.
- 32) Stritch, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
- 33) O'Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 213.
- 34) O'Connell, *op.cit.*, p. 64.
- 35) John Gilmary Shea, *A History of the Catholic Church Within the Limits of the United States*, Volume IV (New York: John G. Shea, 1892), p. 648.
- 36) This letter is found in O'Connell, p. 531 n 24.
- 37) *Ibid.*, p. 531 n 21.
- 38) O'Connell, *op. cit.*, 65-66
- 39) Coffey, *op. cit.*, p. 385.
- 40) Reardon, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
- 41) Coffey, *op. cit.*, p. 530. Kearney was known for his hair-trigger temper and his dismissal of

those with whom he disagreed. It is sad to realize that Kearney's temper was here directed at a much-respected member of his province now in the twilight of his days. Coffey, while holding Kearney in the highest regard, nonetheless is quite critical of Kearney's personal skills in the handling of Dominican Friars who held positions different from his. Kearney was also known for his embattled attitude when dealing with several American bishops. For a further discussion of Kearney's life, his impressive career, and his many contributions to the Dominican Order in the United States, see the author's sketch of his life in the *Bulletin*, Vol. XVI, Nos. 4 and 5 (August and September, 1991).

- 42) O'Connell, p.164.
- 43) Stritch, p. 241.
- 44) O'Connell, p. 207.
- 45) Coffey, p. 510.
- 46) *Ibid.* A biographical sketch of Father Spencer's fascinating life needs to be written. He was a profound scholar and a deeply religious person. One of his projects was the translation of the Gospels from the Greek, which appeared in print in 1899. Another was his translation of the entire New Testament from the Greek, which he finished shortly before his death but was not published until 1957. Cf. Coffey, pp. 509-510.
- 47) O'Connell, p. 164.

New Straitsville St. Augustine Parish Census, 1888

Continued, from Vol. XXXIII, No. 8

Patrick McGown	Clara Hess 42, mother, widow	Robert 17
Mary 46, parents	Frederick 17	Margaret 15
Thomas 25	John 15	Ellen 14
"Chicago"	Roman 11	Catherine 11
	Mary 13	William 9
Henry Campbell 33	Eleonora 10	Louis 7
Ellen 28, parents		James 3
Mary 10	James Fox 32, husband	Jane Stewart 73
Nellie 8	Margaret 29, wife	
Ann 7	"gone"	Patrick Powers 40, widower
Cecilia 5		William McCoy 23
Catherine 3	William John Barry 47	Catherine Powers 20
Monica 8 mos.	Mary 46, parents	Mary Jane Powers 17
Angelica 8 mos.	Maria 21	Johanna Powers 15
Michael Smith 16	Ann 19	John Powers 13

Agnes Powers 11	Mary Ellen 19	John Edward 1 1/2
Margaret Powers 11	Patrick 17	The husband is non-Catholic.
Michael Powers 8	Margaret 15	“Glouster”
John Green 8	Anthony 14	
“south” [?]	John 12	Patrick Sullivan 35
	Bridget 10	Ellen 34, parents
Bridget Costello 47, widow	Catherine 6	Margaret 18 mons
James 24	Henry 5	Julia Sullivan sister 23
Bridget 22	Michael 1 week	John Sullivan brother 21
Patrick 21	“Columbus”	“Columbus”
Thomas 18		
Mary 15	Anthony Padden 47	Daniel Bigby 30
William 11	Bridget 52, parents	Nancy 32, parents
“Chicago”	Ellen 24	James 3
	Margaret 19	John 18 mons
Jesse James Carlow	Sarah 16	
Bridget 26, parents	Elizabeth 14	Sarah Vaines, widow, 65
Mary 6	Charles Smith, adopted 11	John 30
John 4	“Lancaster”	“Dead”
Elizabeth 2		
	Mrs. Catherine Riordan,	Andrew McTague 62
Patrick Dougherty, widower	widow, 65	Catherine 50, parents
Bridget 22	Thomas 28	Susan 21
Sarah 20	John 22	Thomas 20
“Dead”	Patrick 19	Stephen 19
	Margaret 24	Walter 17
John Callaghan 32	Simon Kinney, uncle 68	Ann 15
Emma 31, parents	“Lancaster”	Mary 11
Rose 6		Margaret 8
John Daniel 1 week	Margaret Hanly, widow 55	Andrew 5
	John 32	
Mrs. Mary Harrington, 55,	James 16	James Burdis 41
mother	Thomas 13	Martha 33, parents
Patrick 29		Frances 13
Peter 27	William Gordon 27	James 12
Julia 18	Catherine 24, parents	George 11
John, 25 and Ann, 22, are	Charles	John 9
crossed out	William	Arthur 3
	He does not attend to his	Mary Ann 1
Thomas Dolan 46, husband	religious duties & pays nothing	“Gone”
Rose 32, wife	to the church.	
		Mary Healy, widow, 54
Michael Padden 48	Ellen Kintz, mother, mixed	Thomas 27
Catherine 46, parents	marriage 31	Ellen 19
Thomas E. 21	Mary L. 3 1/2	Sarah 18

Patrick Crowe 70
Mary 56, parents
John 32
Peter 26
Margaret 24
Richard 22
Andrew 20
Patrick 16
Ellen 14
James 8

James McAleer 39
Catherine 35, parents
John 14
Thomas 13
Francis 9
Ellen 6
Mary 4
William 1

William John Stewart 51
Elizabeth 52, parents
Mary Ann 30
Patrick 28
James 24
Elizabeth 22

Patrick Crowe Jr. 39
Margaret 39, husband and wife
Harry, adopted, 7

James Dougherty
Sarah 28, parents
Elizabeth 6
John 5
James 2 1/2
Mary Ann 2 weeks

John Dougherty 30
Bridget 27, parents
Daniel 8
Mary Catherine 6 1/2
Joseph Patrick 5
Edward Francis 2

James Holland 57
Margaret 42, parents
Mary 21
Margaret 19
Patrick 18
Sarah 14
Elizabeth 11
Catherine 9

Agnes 6
Rose 3

Stephen Callaghan 47
Margaret 33, parents
Catherine 16
James 15
Ellen 11
Edward 10
Mary 8
Sarah 6 1/2
Margaret 5
Timonty 3
Gertrude 2 mons.

Edward Powers 39
Ann 35, parents
Mary 16
James 14
Bridget 10
Alice 8
Margaret 4
Ann 2

(To be continued)