



# Barquilla de la Santa Maria

## BULLETIN of the Catholic Record Society - Diocese of Columbus

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### Arthur Vincent Higgins

PERRY COUNTY NATIVE

FIRST NATIVE BORN AMERICAN DOMINICAN  
TO RECEIVE THE MASTER OF SACRED THEOLOGY DEGREE  
PROVINCIAL/FRIEND OF YALE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS  
CHAPLAIN AT MT. CARMEL HOSPITAL

by Anthony J. Lisska

Denison University

(Concluded, from Vol. XX, No. 1)

#### The Return to Ohio

Following his term of office as provincial, Higgins returned briefly to New Haven and then to New York. In 1899, he was assigned to St. Patrick's in Columbus and remained a year. He returned to St. Mary's in New Haven, receiving the appointment of pastor and religious superior.

Because of growing health problems, he resigned the New Haven position and in 1902, he once again returned to St. Patrick's on Grant Avenue in Columbus. Here he stayed for five years. During this time, Higgins undertook the parochial duties of St. Patrick's parish and also served in the position of chaplain to the Sisters of the Holy Cross at Mt. Carmel Hospital in the near west side.

Higgins was assigned to St. Patrick's during the time of the founding of St. Patrick's College by Father Kearney in 1905; this institution later became Aquinas College High School. The records available are silent about any involvement Higgins might have had in the early days in Columbus of this new Dominican venture

into secular education. Given his own student days at St. Joseph College near Somerset, one would suspect that Higgins supported the establishment of this new educational institution. Possibly he was too infirm at this time to enter wholeheartedly into this new establishment sponsored by his friend and former secretary, Kearney. Nonetheless, Coffey, in quoting the *Memoirs* of Father Richard Meaney, the priest-contractor who build both the House of Studies in Washington and the original building for St. Patrick's College, notes that Higgins was present at an informal meeting in Washington in January, 1905, with Bishop Hartley.<sup>14</sup> At this gathering, the Dominicans present suggested to Hartley, who had come east in search of a Religious Order to found his desperately needed secondary school for young men, that he meet with the then provincial, Father Kearney, in Zanesville, to secure if possible Dominican involvement and support for this educational project. Of course, Kearney and Hartley did work together in the founding and establishment of what was the first venture of the Dominicans into secular education since the closing of St. Joseph College, Higgins's *alma mater*, in 1861.

## The Final Years

O'Daniel notes that Higgins's health had not been good for some time. In 1907, he became so ill that he was sent to St. Joseph's near Somerset so he could rest in the country environment. It is unclear what the exact nature of his infirmities were early on, but eventually he endured the debilitating disease of hardening of the cerebral arteries. This malady, O'Daniel suggests, severely affected his brain. From the perspective of seventy-five years later, one suspects that Higgins may have been suffering from what today one would diagnose as Alzheimer's disease. Undergoing extreme debilitation from the hardening of the cerebral arteries, Higgins was sent eventually to the hospital run by the Alexian Brothers in St. Louis. This St. Louis hospital had a special section dedicated to patients with severe mental and psychological problems. There he lingered for several years. Father Higgins died on Easter Sunday, April 8, 1917.<sup>15</sup>

Father Higgins's body was returned to St. Joseph's Priory where the funeral Mass and burial liturgy were celebrated on Thursday, April 12, 1917. His long time friend and former provincial secretary, Father Kearney, delivered the eulogy. Along with Kearney, two other clerics who had been novices under the watchful eye of Father Higgins during his days as novice-master at St. Joseph's, Fathers D. J. Kennedy and J.E. Kernan, were celebrants of the solemn requiem Mass. Both Kennedy and Kearney received the degree of Master of Sacred Theology and became leading lights among the American Dominicans. At this time, Kernan was pastor of St. Patrick's Church in Columbus.

Higgins was buried in the community cemetery of St. Joseph's within ten miles of his birthplace at the family home on the Somerset Road just north of New Lexington.

## A Brilliant Mind with a Quiet Disposition

All of the documents and texts read in preparation of this biographical essay speak eloquently about the very high degree of native intelligence with which Higgins was endowed. The term "brilliant" is used over and over. O'Daniel writes the following:

He had one of the brightest minds in the country. This he stored with knowledge of all kinds by constant reading and study until he became a walking encyclopedia, and could hold his own even with specialists in various fields.<sup>16</sup>

In his account of the first two Dominican priories in the United States, O'Daniel writes in a similar vein:

Of a studious temperament and possessed of a brilliant mind, he became one of the outstanding priests of the country--a profound philosopher and theologian, as well as an excellent linguist.<sup>17</sup>

The *Columbian* obituary contains the following remarks about the depth of Higgins's learning: "Of a kindly, quiet disposition, Father Higgins, in his days of health, possessed one of the most wonderful and brilliant minds in the Dominican Order."<sup>18</sup> Even Coffey, who is quite critical of Higgins's lack of administrative skills, lauds continuously his intellectual skills.

The *Dominicana* obituary reiterates these claims about Higgins's rich and vast intellectual acumen:

Endowed with genius of intellect and a singularly retentive memory, Fr. Higgins stands out as a giant in the intellectual life of the Dominicans of the United States. He was everywhere recognized as one of the best philosophers and theologians in the country. One of the most eminent theologians in the country today,

is authority for the statement that he never met in this land or in the Old World, a man with such a breadth and profundity of learning.<sup>19</sup>

Different accounts also speak of the depth of Higgins's knowledge in classical language and literature. O'Daniel notes that when Higgins met the then Master General of the Dominicans, Andrew Francis Fruhwirth, in Rome, Fruhwirth and his Roman staff marvelled at Higgins's command of Latin and Greek, especially for "one wholly educated in America."

Underneath this vast intellectual depth seems to have rested a quiet and amiable personality well liked by many persons. His mid-western roots going back to the rolling hills of Perry County appear to have kept Higgins a humble and likeable person throughout his life.

Yet given all of this raw intellectual power, one looks in vain for evidence of that native genius to which all of the written documents attest. Where are the books, the articles in philosophy and theology, the other written materials which would serve to justify this claims? Nothing seems to exist. This is indeed unfortunate. One gets the impression that Higgins indeed published little or nothing. If this indeed were the case, then this is a sad commentary on the state of the intellectual life of the American Dominicans during the final three decades of the nineteenth century. In reading between the lines, it is almost as if the Dominicans did not know what to do with a person with these phenomenal intellectual talents. There were no colleges or university appointments for Higgins to assume.

It appears that Higgins's active intellectual life all but ceased once his term of provincial had ended. He was then not yet fifty years old, but he appears to have been, at that time, an exhausted person needing rest and recuperation. From 1897 on, Higgins becomes for the most part an assistant parish priest, and, as noted above, during his stay

in Columbus, the chaplain at Mt. Carmel Hospital. It is almost as if Higgins were physically and mentally burnt out following his term as provincial. Possibly his health problems, which forced his extended hospitalization later in St. Louis, were already beginning to take their toll. One does not know from reading the documents alone.

This brings to a close the fascinating story of a native son of the Diocese of Columbus, a child prodigy, a student of the classics, a thoughtful theologian, and a Dominican priest who served many years of his priestly life within the confines of the diocese of his birth.

#### ENDNOTES

Sources for this biographical study of Father Higgins are principally the written histories of the American Dominicans by Reginald Coffey and Victor F. O'Daniel. In addition, the author consulted the microfilm of *The Catholic Columbian* located in the library of Ohio Dominican College. The bound volumes of *The Dominicana*, from which came an obituary of Higgins, are located in the library of the Josephinum College.

Another person important in the development of the intellectual life of American Catholicism in the second half of the nineteenth century, John Augustine Zahm, was also born in the New Lexington area about the same time as Higgins. Born on June 14, 1851, Zahm attended the University of Notre Dame, became a member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross and eventually their United States Provincial, and served on the faculty of Notre Dame. He died in 1921. Both from New Lexington, Higgins's and Zahm's life spans overlap almost completely.

14. Coffey, pp. 574-575. Coffey notes that Father Meaney, who served on the faculties of both Aquinas College High School and

Providence College, wrote his *Memoirs* during the early 1930s and finished this 472-page typescript on August 16, 1934. Cf. Coffey, p. 572, note 38. Meany's *Memoirs* contain the most original information available about the founding of St. Patrick's College in Columbus. For a more detailed account, the reader may consult the author's *A History of Aquinas College High School*, published by the Society in 1984.

15. O'Daniel lists April 10 as the day of Father Higgins's death; cf. p. 469. Yet the *Dominicana* and the *Columbian* obituaries note that he died on Easter Sunday, 1917.

Easter was on April 8 that year. Both obituaries give Thursday, April 12 as the day of burial from St. Joseph's Priory. Of course, this dating would make April 8 the Sunday of that week. While O'Daniel is usually correct on dates and places, it appears that the April 10 date is mistaken. O'Daniel repeats this date in his narrative on St. Joseph's Priory, *The First Two Dominican Pories in the United States*.

16. O'Daniel, *SJP*, p. 469.  
 17. O'Daniel, *FTDP*, p. 240.  
 18. *The Catholic Columbian*, April 13, 1917, p. 8.  
 19. *Dominicana*, p. 39 (Cf. note 2).

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**Chronicle of Events in the Diocese  
 for 1994**

Compiled by the Editor

Universal Church

Feb. 22 The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, released his *Letter to Families*, a study of the fundamental aspects of the family and marriage, "the heart of the civilization of love."

April The Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments approved service at the altar by women, upon the approval of that interpretation of Canon Law by Pope John Paul II.

May 22 The Holy Father released *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, reaffirming the teaching of the impossibility of ordaining women to the priesthood.

Sept. At the United Nations' International Conference on Population and Development, the Papal emissaries defeated a proposition that would have encouraged abortion throughout the world.

Oct. 2 The Synod of Bishops on the religious life was opened by Pope John Paul II.

Oct. 30 The Vatican announced the appointments of thirty new cardinals, to be installed Nov. 26, bringing the number of appointments by the present pontiff to 100 of the 120 who are under age 80.

Nov. 14 The Vatican released Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, anticipating the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ; announcing a jubilee or holy year in 2000; and setting out a program of preparation for the event.

Diocesan Events

Jan. 19 The diocesan Deaconate School of Theology reopened, with twelve candidates, at the Pontifical College Josephinum.

June 1 The English language edition of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* was released in the United States.

Parishes

Jan. 15 Sacred Heart Church in New

Philadelphia was re-dedicated after renovation of the structure and interior.

Jan. 30 Bishop Griffin dedicated the new St. Cecilia Church in Galloway.

Feb. 20 Ada Our Lady of Lourdes Parish concluded a three-year renovation of its church building on its 120th anniversary.

Feb. 20 Ground was broken for the Holmes County Catholic Center, on the grounds of Millersburg St. Peter Parish, for that parish and Glenmont Sts. Peter and Paul. It was dedicated by Bishop Griffin on September 11.

June 12 The Sisters of Divine Providence withdrew from Dover St. Joseph parish, where the order had served since 1886.

Oct. 9 A Monument to the Unborn was dedicated at Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish in Columbus, having been erected by K of C Council 11188.

Dec. 10 A new parish center at Columbus St. Agatha Parish was dedicated by Bishop Griffin.

Dec. Bishop Griffin approved a program of parish administration by a lay or religious (non-priest) administrator for Columbus St. Stephen the Martyr Parish, to begin July 11, 1995.

#### Vocations

Nov. 21, 1993 Diocesan seminarian Dwayne A. McNew was ordained to the diaconate by Most Rev. Anthony G. Bosco of Greensburg, at St. Vincent Seminary, Latrobe, Pa.

June 11 Bishop Griffin ordained David E. Getreu and Joseph B. Nguyen to the holy priesthood in St. Joseph Cathedral.

Oct. 7 Diocesan seminarian Matthew N. Hoover was ordained to the diaconate in St.

Peter's Basilica in Rome by Most Rev. David B. Thompson, Bishop of Charleston (S.C.).

#### Retirements

July 12 Msgr. Ralph J. Huntzinger, pastor of Columbus St. Mary Parish, and Rev. Joseph E. Stanton, pastor of Columbus St. Aloysius Parish, retired.

#### Necrology

Feb. 3 Sister Carmina Dattalo, O.S.F. of Stella Niagara, died at Lewiston, New York; she was a native of Columbus.

Feb. Sr. M. Laurene Fetter, of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate (Joliet, Ill.), died at the age of 94 years; she was a native of Columbus St. Mary parish.

Feb. 26 Died in Greensburg, Pa., Sister Maria Thecla Hisrich of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, aged 87; she was a native of Dover.

March 1 Sr. Norberta (Esther) Sheehy, S.N.D.N., aged 84 years, died in Cincinnati; she was a native of Columbus.

March 1 Monsignor Michael L. Donovan, former Chancellor and Vicar General of the diocese, pastor of Reynoldsburg St. Pius parish, died at the age of 55.

March 29 Died in Midvale, Rev. Anthony Migoni, of the Society of the Precious Blood, aged 81; he was a native of Wainwright.

April 3 Died in Stella Niagara, N.Y. Sister Celeste Paul, born Mary Paul in Zanesville, who had entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity in 1914. She had served at several schools and institutions in this diocese.

April 11 Sister Rosalie Kern, of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity

(Stella Niagara), aged 73, died in Columbus. She was from Carroll, O., and served 42 years in this diocese.

April 12 Died in Bardstown, Ky. Sister Beatrice O'Hare, aged 87, of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth. She was a native of Shawnee in Perry County.

June 10 Died Rev. Anthony Bauer, of the Fathers of the Divine Word, in Accra, Ghana; he was a native of Columbus, aged 82 years.

June 11 Sr. M. Gemma Caito, O.P. died at Mohun Hall at St. Mary of the Springs; she was a native of Columbus, aged 79 years.

June 11 Sr. M. Daniel Babbert, O.S.F. died at Stella Niagara, N.Y., aged 95 years; she was a native of Columbus.

June 13 Sister Dorita Basbagill, O.P., died at St. Mary of the Springs, aged 94; she was a native of Columbus.

June 14 Died in Steubenville, Monsignor Jan B. Kish, priest of the Diocese of Steubenville, at the age of 80; he had been ordained for the Diocese of Columbus in 1940 and was a native of Mingo Junction.

July 4 Died in Columbus, Rev. Thomas E. Hopping, aged 81; a retired priest of this diocese, he was buried in Springfield, O.

July 4 Rev. James H. Kimberley, aged 88, retired priest of the diocese, died in Naples, Florida; burial was in his native city of Zanesville.

July 22 Br. John A. Zollner, S.J., aged 84, a native of Columbus, died in French Lick, Ind.

Aug. 1 Died at St. Mary's, Ohio, Rev. John P. Byrne, retired priest of this diocese, founding

pastor of Worthington St. Michael parish, aged 91 years.

Oct. 19 Sr. Florence Myers, of the Franciscan Sisters of Charity, aged 83 years, died in Manitowoc, Wis.; she was a native of Zanesville.

Oct. 23 Sr. Mary Patrick Foreman, O.P., aged 77, died at Mohun Hall in Columbus; she was a native of Lancaster.

Oct. 23 Deacon Robert A. Holehouse of Coshocton Sacred Heart Parish, aged 71 years, died in Columbus.

Nov. 23 Died in Waco, Texas, Rev. Robert W. Henderson, aged 67, a native of Coshocton.

Dec. 1 Rev. James J. McEwan, aged 83, retired priest of the diocese, died in Dublin, O.

Dec. 27 Died at St. Francis de Sales in Newark, Fr. William Johnson, pastor of that parish, aged 71 years.

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**Chillicothe St. Mary's Church  
Baptismal Register, 1835-1846  
(Continued from Vol. XX, No. 2)**

**1844, continued**

July 18 I received into the church Isabella Blaccar, 25 years old, wife of Daniel Robbins, making abjuration of the errors of the reformation. H. D. Juncker

July 28 James, born June 30, son of James and Ellen Lyons; spon. Robert McCarty and Margaret Cull. T. R. Butler

July 28 Laurence, born Sept. 28, 1841, son of William and Eliza Burke; spon. Roger Cull and Bridget Moran. TRB

July 28 Daniel, born Oct. 26, 1843, son of John Dougherty and his wife Mary; spon. James and Ellen Lyons. TRB

July 28 Thomas, born Feb. 5, 1844, son of William and Eliza Burke; spon. Mary Flood and Philip Heartlaub. TRB

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same day Franz Xavier, born July 23, son of Xavier and Louisa Long; spon. John Hern and Maria Eisler. TRB

same day Joseph, born July 25, son of George and Leocadia Grover; spon. Andrew Beir and Theresa Hern. TRB

same day Mary, born May 22, daughter of George and Mary Geiser; spon. Francis Bi--se and Cunigunda Buisse?. TRB

same day Ellen, born July 24, daughter of George Barleon and his wife Mary; spon. Joseph Mohl and Ellenora Barleon. TRB

Aug. 15 Louisa Amelia, born Aug. 9, daughter of George Bermann and Josepha Gerdeissen; spon. William M. Anderson and Mary Bauman. J. B. Emig, S.J.

same day John, born Aug. 10, son of Fidelis Büchler and Bernarda Wunderle; spon. Fridolin Wunderle and Gertrude Schaefer. JBE

same day Catherine Ann, born July 31, daughter of Patrick Cusick and Bridget Hiry; spon. Michael Reily and Bridget Philbert. JBE

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Aug. 18 John, son of Joseph Wagner and Anna Schmith, born Aug. 2; spon. John Schleicher and Catherine. JBE

Sept. 22 Joseph, born Aug. 25, son of Peter Peter and Eugenea Schwerer; spon. Martin

Bauman and Catherine Hirn. T. H. Luhr

same day John, born Sept. 12, son of Leonard Linder and Emily Schwerer; spon. Sylvester Bauman and Joseph Matzler. THL

same day John Adam, born Sept. 17, son of Christopher Eichenlaub and Elizabeth Schröder; spon. Jacob Schotz and Margaret Schröder (non-Catholic). THL

same day Jacob, born Sept. 20, son of Landerine Hetdick and Mary Tisch; spon. Louis Lang and Elizabeth Armbruster. THL

Sept. 23 Jane, born Sept. 4, dtr. of Michael Davis and Elizabeth McGee or Winn; spon. William B. Hanley and Catherine Hirn. THL

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Nov. 17 James, born Nov. 7, son of James Scully and Johanna Dougherty; spon. Michael Rigny and Margaret Cull.

same day Michael, born Oct. 27, son of Joseph Hartmann and Margaret Hess; spon. James Scully and Anna Rigny.

same day Jerome, born Nov. 6, son of Tadeus Sauter and Christina Kittel; spon. Francis Xavier Long and Elizabeth his wife.

same day Mary Elizabeth, born Nov. 9, daughter of Richard Ellet and Mary Santer; spon. Rudolph Siegfried and Mary Elizabeth Berman. HDJ

Nov. 20 William, born Nov. 6, son of William Hanley and Mary Gallagher; spon. Susanna Brydain and Edward Jennings (non-Catholic). HDJ

Nov. 24 Joseph, born Nov. 19, son of Maximus Bear and Elizabeth Muller; spon. Joseph Schmitt and Theresa Hirn.

same day Barbara, born Nov. 8, daughter of Ignatius Freyermuth and Magdalena Farni; spons. Joseph Wagner and Barbara Bardner. HDJ

Nov. 25 conditionally, Louis Schmitt, age 26 years, and father of Christina, born Aug. 11, 1840 and Caroline, born Aug. 13, 1842, who were baptized with him. Spons. Alexander Spett and Anna Maria Baumann. HDJ

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Nov. 26 Mary Elizabeth Lydia Green, 19 years old; spons. Bridget Gussack. HDJ

Dec. 1 Catherine, daughter of Francis Sebold and Catherine Jacob; spons. Godfried Jacob and Elizabeth Mudders. J. O'Mealey

Dec. 8 Carl, born Nov. 25, son of George Moll and Teresa Baumeier; spons. John Jacob Eichenlaub and Helen Barleon. J. M. Young

Dec. 22 John Leonard, born Dec. 13, son of John Eck and Margaret his wife; spons. John Leonard Gärtner and Catherine Gärtner. JBE

Dec. 24 Catherine, born Dec. 15, daughter of Adam Eck and Maria Elizabeth his wife; spons. George Schwartz and Catherine Gärtner. JBE

Dec. 29 John, born Dec. 21, son of Sebastian Litter and Catherine his wife; spons. Michael Kirsch and Maria Hechinger. JBE

Dec. 29 Margaret, born Dec. 20, daughter of Michael Rollmann and Walburga his wife; spons. Xavier Dirck and Louisa Spät. JBE

Dec. 29 Mary Caroline, daughter of Anton Alberty and Caroline his wife; spons. Landlin Hess and Mary Lind. JBE  
[Page 69 is blank except for the last line of the above record.]

1845

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Jan. 5 John Meyer, son of Vincent Meyer and Catherine Keyser; spons. John Keyser and Maria Keyser. James F. Wood

Jan. 12 Augustine, born Aug. 3, 1844, son of Peter Jeez and Elizabeth his wife; spons. Augustine Hummel and Catherine Mutchel.

same day Mary, born Dec. 9, 1844, daughter of Daniel Higgins and Mary his wife; spons. Daniel and Mary Cull.

Jan. 13 Daniel, born Jan. 11, son of Roger Cull and Martha his wife; spons. James Malone and A. Rigney.

Jan. 20 Susan, born Jan. 6, daughter of Peter Smith and Margaret his wife; spons. Joseph Smith and M. Strohhaeker.

Feb. 2 Mary Magdalene, born Jan. 22, daughter of Vincent Nodler and Catherine his wife; spons. M. Smith.

Feb. 16 Laurence, born Feb. 8, son of Frederick Deger and Catherine his wife; spons. Laurence Hurt and Sophia Müller.

same day Andrew, born Feb. 3, son of Andrew Connley and Mary his wife; spons. James Murphy. D. Cull, priest.

(To be continued)

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