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THE FIRST CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN
JOLIET, ILLINOIS

By

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l. Power (1869-1886)

na, Illinois, in 1869 was shepherd of souls. Born 19, because of the great adelphia. After ordination he was pastor success- acon, Illinois (March, trick's, Chicago (May, eptember, 1869).¹ years, very few details ver's main contribution rging the rectory; for idences in the city and e Catholic High flag

oley was installed as of the diocese in order oyed untold millions

of dollars of church property. The charity of the outlying parishes was prompt and generous and enabled the city to recover in a very short while.

On October 24, 1875, two Dominican priests opened a parish mission. The fact that two priests were employed indicates that the parish was still quite sizeable, in spite of all the new parishes that had been established. Most references speak of "about 300 families" in St. Patrick's.

It was fortunate that the house had been finished, for the financial depression of 1877-1878 brought new fears and sorrows to the city. In desperation, some 500 unemployed men at a mass meeting asked the city government to sponsor some work by cutting down the steep incline on Exchange (Jefferson) Street, west of Bluff Street. The proposal was refused for lack of funds but the idea remained a popular bone of contention until the "Exchange St. Cut-off" became a reality late in 1886.²

Bishop Foley died on February 19, 1879, and was succeeded (September 10, 1880) by Patrick Augustine Feehan. At the same time that Chicago was made an archdiocese. For fifteen years he had helped re-establish the diocese of Nashville after the Civil War and for the next twenty-two years he was to labor zealously, striving particularly to expand the Church in the outlying areas to prevent an over-concentration of interest in the city of Chicago.³

In 1880, the Holy Cross sisters relinquished the school in Joliet. The Ladies of Loretto, whose motherhouse was at Toronto, Canada, assumed the burden and soon also were teaching at St. Mary's, Sacred Heart and, later, at St. Bernard's. The sisters who taught at St. Patrick's lived with those of St. Mary's in the former Providence high school building.

Father Power died of "Brite's Disease" on January 27, 1886. In his last hour he had requested that there be no carriages in the funeral procession and his wish was respected. Archbishop Feehan, forty-five priests and hundreds of friends and parishioners walked in silence to the cemetery.⁴ Sometime later, the remains were removed to Chicago and the grave was used for Father Thomas Walsh, the son of the Walshes already mentioned so often in connection with the history of St. Patrick's.

² There is a picture in the *Joliet News*, Nov. 26, 1886.

³ Rev. J. J. McGovern, *The Catholic Church in Chicago*, 1890. Memorial book on the occasion of Archbishop Feehan's silver jubilee as bishop. Contains also the diary and notes of Bishop Quarter and of Bishop Van de Velde.

⁴ *Joliet News*, January 30, 1886.

Joliet, Ill.

July 21, 1844

and Nineteen Six the corner
ward by Rev. St. W. Dunne
cornerstone was laid with
were the following; one, an
press and one of Chicago
cornerstone contractor Frank
superintendent of the city, O'Reilly.

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broadway. The school was
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of the city. There were six
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the were maintained. There
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must be fitted in by imag-
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New World and would
on only two or three days

2. leaving behind him a
only become the greatest
friend James J. Quigley,
on March 10, 1903.

assistant of St. Patrick's,
before the Dublin. For
the spirit of the parish
for whom he worked
remembered. At this

accepted the new post
it seemed to
move into a new
mission Quigley came
have him closer at hand.
can consume. Father
July 2, 1903 the first
of Monsignor Dunne

from the first of 1890. St.
governor.



8. Father Peter Paul O'Dwyer (1911-1917)

THE next pastor of St. Patrick's was Father Peter O'Dwyer who had been ordained in Ireland in 1888. Coming to the United States, he was assigned first to St. Mary's, Chicago, then to St. Rose, Chicago (1894-1898), Sacred Heart, Joliet, for two years and then, as pastor, to St. Patrick's, Lemont (1900-1905) and St. Rose, Wilmington (1905-1911) before coming to Joliet.

Father O'Dwyer stayed only six years but in that time built a new rectory ("Big enough for a bishop someday," he is quoted as saying) and guided smoothly the transfer of the school from the Ladies of Loretto to the Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Michigan.

Eight sisters and Rev. Mother Camilla, O.P., arrived in Joliet on August 16, 1914. The sisters lived in the old rectory under conditions that would try any hardy soul. Fortunately, by the summer of 1918 they were in the new convent on Marion Street.¹

Archbishop Quigley died on July 10, 1915. Archbishop Mundelein was installed on January 25, 1916, in a magnificent ceremony which was deliberately planned to make the people of Chicago realize that the Catholic Church in Chicago intended to assume a new role of leadership and justified pride in its contribution to the civic, educational and cultural life of the area. The Catholic immigrant had become of age as the American Catholic.

During the year 1917, Father O'Brien was transferred to St. Patrick's church, Chicago, and Father O'Dwyer became pastor of St. Rose of Lima, Chicago, where he died on January 10, 1931.

¹ The Christian Brothers lived in the old rectory from August, 1918, to April, 1919. The Brothers then moved to the new rectory and the old building was taken down soon after.