

CATHOLIC STANDARD

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Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

One Hundred Years with the Jesuits in British Guiana

1857, – 1957

Part VI: Bishop Gully, S.J.

Bishop Richard Lester Guilly, S.J.
Vicar Apostolic – October, 1954, to February, 1956
Bishop of Georgetown, 1956 -



Right Reverend
RICHARD LESTER GUILLY, S.J.
Consecrated: 24th October, 1954.
Titular Bishop of Adraa.
Appointed on 29th February, 1956
Bishop of Georgetown.

IN the following July, 1954, came the announcement that Father R. L. Guilly, S.J., until then Superior, had been appointed by His Holiness Pope Pius XII Titular Bishop of Adraa and Vicar Apostolic of British Guiana and Barbados. The Papal Bull was received in the following October when Bishop Weld formally handed over to his successor.

Bishop Guilly's consecration took place on Mission Sunday, 17th October, 1954. The new Bishop had hoped to make the consecration an open air ceremony on the grounds of St. Stanislaus College in order to allow as many as possible to attend the ceremony, but on account of bad weather this plan had to be abandoned and the consecration took place in the Cathedral. The ceremony was broadcast so that great numbers of people who could not be present were able to follow it at home. Nevertheless, thousands packed the huge Cathedral as never before in its history. Long before the gates were opened they stood waiting at every entrance literally to take it by storm. Within a matter of minutes of the opening, the Church was thronged.

The Consecrator was His Grace, Archbishop Luigi Raimondi, Titular Archbishop of Tarsus, Apostolic Nuncio to the Republic of Haiti and Apostolic Delegate to the British Caribbean. He was assisted by Bishop Weld and Bishop Kenneth Turner - Bishop of Lishui, China - of the Scarborough Foreign Mission Society, whose Priests had so very recently come to the Colony.

Attending on Archbishop Raimondi were the two Superiors. Very Reverend Francis Smith, S.J., (appointed in succession to Fr. Guilly) and Very Reverend Edward Moriarty, S.F.M.

Present in the Cathedral were His Excellency the Governor, Sir Alfred Savage, K.C.M.G. and Lady Savage. From the neighbouring colony of Dutch Guiana came Bishop Stephen Kuypers C.S.S.R. (Vicar Apostolic) and the Very Reverend W. Clerx, C.S.S.R., Administrator of the Cathedral; and from Trinidad came Very Reverend F. M. Fitzgerald, O.P., Vicar General representing His Grace the Archbishop of Port-of-Spain, Dom Adelbert van Duin, O.S.B. Lord Abbot of Mt. St. Benedict, Very Reverend C. P. Coyne, O.P., (Vicar Provincial of the Dominicans), Very Reverend J. J. Brett, C.S.Sp. (Superior of the Holy Ghost Fathers) and Rev. Brother Dunstan Curtin (Superior of the Presentation Brothers).

On the following Wednesday, October 27th, a huge crowd of over 3,000 gathered in the hall of Queen's College, Georgetown (again on account of bad weather which precluded the use of St. Stanislaus College grounds), for a reception organised by the Conference of Catholic Societies. The Conference summoned to this reception, representatives of Catholic Societies from all over the country. It was a truly unique occasion at which the Catholic laity of British Guiana were privileged to welcome to these shores the Apostolic Delegate, the Holy Father's representative in the person of Archbishop Raimundi, as well as the other distinguished visitors, and at the same time had the opportunity not only of welcoming their new Bishop, but of publicly paying tribute to the tremendous work of Bishop Weld during his 22 years as Vicar Apostolic. Present also were His Excellency the Governor and Lady Savage. The Militia Band was in attendance and played the Papal March, "Silver Trumpets" both on the arrival of the Archbishop and at the close of the gathering.

Marian Year

1954 had been proclaimed the Marian Year by His Holiness the Pope. It was marked each month by a pilgrimage of school children to one or other of the country Churches dedicated to Our Lady. These pilgrimages were organised by the Catholic Teachers' Guild and often comprised 600 or more children drawn from Catholic Schools both secondary and primary. In the Parochial Hall in Georgetown there was in May a special Marian Exhibition which ran for one week. Each of the various sodalities and guilds was responsible for a particular section illustrating some doctrine or devotion connected with Our Lady. Groups of school children visited it during the day when there was generally a priest to explain each section and, every evening, there was a short talk by a priest. Members of each sodality were detailed each day to be present and to answer questions on their particular section. In October, the Mysteries of the Rosary were portrayed in a series of tableaux in the Cathedral on three successive Sundays.

The year was marked in Barbados by the building of the second Church in the island - the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary at Verdun, St. John's. Started on 2nd October, 1954, it was completed in exactly 59 days, and opened on December 5th, three days before the close of the Marian Year.

The Close of the Marian Year was also marked by the ordination in Rome, on December 7th of another Guianese Priest for this Colony, Fr. Benedict Singh. On December 8th, the Centenary of the definition of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, the Bishop celebrated Pontifical High Mass in the Cathedral. He later said how proud he was of the report he sent to Rome of the Marian Year activities in the Vicariate.



**Fr. ROBERT CHADWICK, S.J.,
Chancellor of the Diocese
Bishop Guilly's secretary.**

Eucharistic Year

Bishop Guilly made 1955 a special Eucharistic Year for the Vicariate in which he called for an increased devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and earnest prayer for more local vocations. Again the response from the schools, fostered by the Catholic Teachers' Guild, was enthusiastic, processions and a school children's Eucharistic Art Exhibition being special features. The Exhibition was held in Georgetown, but included exhibits from schools in many parts of the country. Throughout the Vicariate there was greater attendance at Mass and Holy Communion and a notably increased interest in local vocations.

In Barbados there was an outstanding public torchlight procession.

A historic event was the granting in this year - 1955 - of the Faculty to use English in the administration of the sacraments.

Development

The pace of the development previous Episcopate continued. In his Reviews of the year given at the Annual Conferences of Catholic Societies, Guilly has been able to record:

Presbyteries - the building of the presbytery of Our Lady of Fatima, to be the headquarters of the Scarboro Fathers in this country; a presbytery at Meadowbank which enabled a priest - Fr. G. W. Crimp, S.J. - to live in the district, thus becoming the first resident priest in succession to Bishop Hynes of 1857; and a new presbytery at Mabaruma.

Schools - the opening of the Marian Wing of St. Rose's High School, admitted one of the finest buildings of its type in the Caribbean; the new science laboratories for St. Stanislaus College; another primary school, St. Pius Xth in the new housing scheme at La Penitence on the outskirts of Georgetown, as well as the extension of St. Winefride's School in Newtown, Kitty. In the Rupununi and Pakaraima areas five new schools have been started, bringing the total number there to eighteen.

In Barbados, the Ursuline nuns secured a valuable site adjoining their convent and were able to further extend their high school. On the 27th May, 1956, a chapel dedicated to the Sacred Heart was opened at Foul Bay, St. Philip's. This achievement, filling a long-felt want, followed on work carried out in the district for years by the Ursuline nuns and Fr. Shorrocks. The chapel is attached to "Loyola House" which was leased for five years as a Retreat House.

In July 1956, Mass was said for the first time in the nearly-completed Church of St. Patrick in the gold and diamond fields of the Mazaruni district, British Guiana.

Church of our Lady of Fatima

But the outstanding concern of the new Bishop became the building of the new Church of Our Lady of Fatima, the third Parish Church in Georgetown. The building of this Church, as the Bishop pointed Out, was not to be the concern of the members of the parish only but of all Catholics in Georgetown. Building commenced in 1956, and the concrete foundation and steel frame work were completed early in 1957. His Lordship was able to lay the foundation stone just one week before the completion of St. Joseph.

At the meeting of the Conference of Catholic Societies early in 1956, a Central Catholic Action Committee was set up to meet quarterly in consultation with the Bishop in furthering the work of Catholic Action.

Rupununi Mission

A few days later the Bishop set out on a three-week tour of the Rupununi Missions. Going the complete round of the Northern and Southern Savannahs and the Southern Pakaraima Mountains, he administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 1,048 candidates. After covering over 400 miles by foot, mule back and land-rover, His Lordship said that his first two days on mule back, gave him a tiny glimpse of the sacrifices involved in building up the mission since 1910.

On his return to Georgetown, there came the news that His Holiness the Pope had raised the Vicariate of British Guiana to the status of a Diocese - the Diocese of Georgetown, naming Bishop Guilly its first Bishop. His formal appointment as Bishop of Georgetown was made on the 29th February, 1956.

Three other Vicariates Apostolic in the Caribbean - French Guiana, Jamaica and British Honduras - were also raised to the rank of Diocese with Sees named from their capital cities, Cayenne, Kingston and Belize; and two new Dioceses were created - St. George of Grenada embracing Grenada, the Grenadines, St. Vincent and Barbados; and the Diocese of Castries, St Lucia.

Bishop Guilly pointed out that the setting up of these Dioceses marked the coming of age of the Church in this country and in the Caribbean. It was an occasion for great rejoicing but it brought with it added responsibilities. In the case of our own Diocese it also brought a tinge of sadness in the fact that it broke the long link between British Guiana and Barbados.

Inauguration

The inauguration of the Diocese of Georgetown took place on Sunday, 22nd July, 1956, in a ceremony at the Cathedral in Georgetown, when the Papal Bulls erecting the Diocese and appointing Bishop Guilly as first Bishop were read, and the Bishop was solemnly installed in his Cathedral.

There was a representative attendance of Catholics from all parts of the colony. His Excellency the Governor, Sir Patrick Renison, K.C.M.G., and Lady Renison were also present. The ceremony closed with solemn Benediction during which the Te Deum was sung and the Bishop consecrated the Diocese to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary



INAUGURATION OF THE DIOCESE OF GEORGETOWN.

Bishop Weld and Fr. McCaffrey escort Bishop Gully to his throne in the Cathedral as first Bishop of Georgetown

Caribbean Bishops

In February, 1957 Bishop Gully attended a Conference in Jamaica of the Bishops of the Caribbean area, the second of such conferences since he had become Bishop. The Bishops stated that their own substantial contribution to the development of the area would be "their effort to establish a self-propagating and self supporting Church in the British Caribbean." This would be done chiefly through the increase in local vocations to the priesthood.

This statement of the Caribbean Bishops underlines the requirement of the Holy Father in setting up the Diocese of Georgetown (and the other Dioceses) that as soon as possible there should be started here at least a minor seminary.

Among the decisions reached by the Bishops was that of setting up as soon as possible a Catholic Chapel for the University College of the West Indies.

Barbados

Returning from the Conference, the Bishop called in at Barbados and administered the Sacrament of Confirmation for the last time as Pastor of that island when there was a record number of 430 candidates

He took the opportunity of saying goodbye to the people, assuring them that they would always have a special place in his prayers and mass. He was very happy that they should have for their new Bishop, Monsignor Justin Fields, whose well-known leadership in the Caribbean would be an inspiration to them.. He himself had just accepted an Invitation to be an Assistant Bishop at his consecration in Grenada on March 25th.

Close

And so we come to the close of this review - from its very nature necessarily incomplete - of the first century of the Society of Jesus in British Guiana.

In 1857, the first Jesuit Fathers found five churches, one convent and two schools. Today, there are in British Guiana 52 churches with some 55 dependent mass centres, 12 convent chapels, and 58 schools.

But, in the words of our Bishop, "Let us not consider the work of the Church in terms of brick and mortar." Rather shall we think of the thousands of souls who have been brought to the knowledge of the sublime truth through the work of the Jesuit Fathers in the past one hundred years. Quoting a lay speaker at the Conference of Catholic societies on the 17th February, 1957, when the Bishop disclosed the fact of the Jesuit Centenary: "*The debt owed to the priests of the Society of Jesus in this country is something that can never be repaid except by prayer. And our prayer is that God will reward them.*"



OPPOSITE

*Four
'Golden
Jubilees'
in a year!*

Page, reprinted from the Catholic Standard of 1905, shows the four jubilarians who completed their fifty years in the Society within 12 months of each other.

**Bishop Guilly in Barbados with Fr. A. Parkinson, S.J., sitting at left,
and Fr. J. L. Morrison, S.J. at right.**

Back row: Fr. L. Raymond-Barker, S.J. and Fr. T. Pearson, S.J.

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