

REV. IGNATIUS MCDONALD, O. CARM.

1867-1930

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The Sword, October 1940

FATHER Ignatius McDonald was the son of Patrick McDonald and Anna Delaney and was born in Anamalt, Kilkenny County, Ireland, June 17, 1867. He was a brother of Frater John McDonald, who died in Buffalo September 6, 1939, and a nephew of old Father Theodore McDonald. Father Ignatius came to this country after having finished his college course in Ireland. Hence he was allowed to enter the novitiate quickly and was received as a Novice the same day on which his brother, John, was professed, February 28, 1888. He himself was professed May 5, 1889; and, having finished his philosophy and theology, he was ordained at Niagara May 28, 1892. Father Louis Guenther had been Prior during his scholasticate, and Father Anastasius Kreidt had been his Novice Master.

One of his early important assignments was to the pastorate of Mount Carmel Church, Tenafly, New Jersey. He took charge on June 20, 1894, succeeding Father Berthold Lauzau. He made many improvements on the buildings, and his kindly and jovial disposition won for him a host of friends, many of whom still cherish his memory. He was also attached to the Mission Band, serving many years.

He, being an excellent speaker, did excellent work on the missions, but unfortunately he was not a well man. Being extremely nervous and impetuous, he would at times suffer a sudden den breakdown and would have to be relieved from active service. As a result, his complete recuperation often necessitated spending long periods in hospitals. He died of pneumonia in St. Luke's Hospital, Jersey City, November 28, 1930. His Prior, Father Luke Leininger, a member of the same Tenafly community, died on the same day. Solemn funeral services were held in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, and they rest side by side in Mount Carmel Cemetery.

Despite his frequent periods of sickness, his great ability as a speaker and also as a teacher made it easy for his superiors to place him upon his recovery. Had Father Ignatius been less active, had he been less enthusiastic about his work, his health would not have suffered. On two different occasions he was assigned to St. Cyril's College, Chicago, as teacher, here he did splendid work for a while, but in each instance the strain of school work proved too severe for a man of his temperament. He was very popular with the boys and their parents but physical incapacity always forced his superiors to change his work and residence from time to time. He was assigned to Niagara Falls as assistant from 1908 to 1910. Later he assisted in parish work in the Leavenworth diocese. Despite his unfortunate sickness and the treatment that it entailed, Father Ignatius proved to be a good companion; he could entertain cleverly and had an excellent sense of humor. To hear him tell Irish ghost stories was a treat never to be forgotten. Banshees and all the other characters of Irish folk-lore became real and vivid when under the spell of his stories. Because of his excellent companionship he was highly regarded in many cities and many parishes where he had worked—Pittsburgh, Niagara, New Baltimore, Scipio and elsewhere. He was of a tall, wiry type and was a very handsome man and of a very dignified bearing. It was only when he was ill that he ever appeared to be anything but a perfect gentleman. When a spell of sickness was upon him, he drove himself more than ever, the simplest duty calling forth his every effort; writing or some other routine work would demand his every reserve.

No biography of Father Ignatius would be complete were it to neglect his many witty and apt retorts; He delighted in telling of the social call he one time made. The people were very insistent that he stay to dinner. He cleverly excused himself by saying that he had to be home at once since he had just been appointed Hebdomadarius. He was much congratulated upon his new office and departed with the best wishes of all that he would hold the office for many years.

While stationed in Pittsburgh he was chaplain at the Rosalia Hospital for some time and is known to have preached eloquent sermons there. The Sisters still refer to him with great admiration and say that they enjoyed many a pleasant hour with him.

Unfortunately his life was a sad mixture of joy and depression. Had he been blessed with good health and physical strength, he would have distinguished himself as a student and orator. As it was, he gave his best to his Order — and was too much forgetful of self to guard his health and own personal well-being. His declining years from 1925 to 1930 were spent in Tenafly, where he died at the age of sixty-three.