

Father Fidelis Pauling, O.Carm.

June 25, 1877— September 3, 1944

By the Rev. Leo J. Walter, O. Carm.

Ever since the foundation of the Carmelite Monastery at Niagara Falls, Canada, in 1875, the American Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary has had a fair representation of Canadian-born members. Among these was Father Fidelis Paulding. Father Fidelis was born in Stamford, outside Niagara Falls, Canada, on June 25, 1877. His parents were Dr. James Paulding and Adelaide White, both converts to the Catholic faith. Father Fidelis was baptized in St. Patrick's church in Niagara Falls, on July 22 of the same year, and named Rudolph, the given name of Father Pius Father Fidelis Paulding, O.Carm. Mayer, O. Carm., afterward Father General, who had been instrumental in converting Mr. and Mrs. Paulding.

The family later moved to Kansas and then to Superior, Wis., from which place Rudolph Paulding came to the Carmelites at New Baltimore, Pa., early in 1894, a lanky lad of almost seventeen. He received the Carmelite habit with one companion on August 15, 1894. Father Basil Kahler had also been received on March 26 of the same year. Father Otto Wiedemann was novice master. A year later, he pronounced his simple vows, and on October 18, 1898, made his solemn vows. When the Chicago foundation was established in 1900, the community of New Baltimore was transferred to the new foundation; but as the house was not ready, the clerics in theology were sent to Niagara Falls in 1901. Among these was Frater Fidelis.

In 1902, some months before the others, Frater Fidelis was sent to Chicago to act as prefect among the boarding pupils of the new St. Cyril High School and College. He was ordained on July 11, 1903, in St. Ignatius chapel, by Bishop Muldoon, then Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago.

After ordination, Father Fidelis continued on the faculty of St. Cyril, chiefly in the department of mathematics and business. There he remained until 1909, when he was assigned to New Baltimore, because of ill health. In New Baltimore, he was procurator of the house and professor of Church History for the clerics. After a year, he resumed his post in the school at Chicago, remaining until 1915 and serving as prefect of discipline from 1912 to 1914.

In 1915, he succeeded Father Anselm as pastor of Mt. Carmel parish in Tenafly, N. J. There was ample work waiting for him there. Tenafly was beginning to expand. More room was needed in the school. Father Fidelis remodeled and enlarged the building. The Sisters who taught in the school needed a home. He procured property and built a convent for them. The whole parish property was enlarged and improved. Father Fidelis' pastorate included the years of World War I, and the presence of Camp Merritt was a serious responsibility. Camp Merritt was an important, if not the chief, point of embarkation for soldiers destined for Europe; and as the Catholic soldiers insisted on the consolations of religion before embarking, it fell to the local clergy to assist the heavily-burdened army chaplains. Father Fidelis was ever ready to help and organized his confreres in the same noble work. Together they spent many weary nights in the hearing of soldiers' confessions. The growing number of Catholics in the northern

section of the parish demanded service, and under Father Fidelis' auspices a new church was built for them in Cresskill.

In 1924, he was transferred to the pastorate of St. Patrick's parish in Niagara Falls, Ont., where he had been baptized. A critical situation had arisen in the parish which had divided its members into opposing factions. Happily, Father Fidelis was able to steer clear of the difficulty, and in a short time peace once more flourished. He found a well-established parochial school, which, however, was inadequate. Under his direction, the parish acquired additional property and erected another building, housing a splendid auditorium, classrooms, and a recreation center.

As early as 1935, a slight trembling of the hands indicated the presence of Parkinson's disease, which gradually became aggravated. Father Fidelis stuck to his post as long as he was able, but at last, in 1939, he was forced to retire.

He retired to St. Cecilia's priory in Englewood, N. J., where his old friend and classmate Father Basil was prior and pastor. Little by little, the disease made further inroads, until at last he was no longer able to celebrate mass. Two weeks before his death, he was taken to the Alexian Brothers hospital in Elizabeth, where he died on September 3, 1944. He died in his sleep with no one present.

Mention must also be made of important services to the Order rendered by Father Fidelis in the years that he was pastor of Mt. Carmel parish in Tenafly. It is the work of the missions. When he could be spared from essential duties, Father Fidelis took his turn on the Carmelite Mission Band. Few truly appreciate the value of this work in furthering the Carmelite cause. It carried the Carmelite banner far and wide into territory where it was practically unknown, it gave the community prestige far in excess of what its numbers warranted, and it was a "life saver" in the financial stringency in which the American Province found itself. It must be recalled that in most cases the missionaries preached their missions and retreats in time "saved" from other responsibilities.

As a character, Father Fidelis will not easily be forgotten, although his influence in the policy of the community was not very extensive. Since the sphere of his activity was chiefly parochial, he had little opportunity for such influence. It is true that he was a Definitor from 1921 to 1924; and, although he was technically a Prior for many years, he never had a community of any size to govern. He was forthright and outspoken, and one knew immediately on which side of a question Father Fidelis stood. He was not concerned whether one agreed or not. His piety was of the direct type, without frills and entirely unostentatious. Only those who shared his confidence know of its strongly virile quality. His long years of affliction brought a patience and mellowness that many had not looked for in a man of his temperament. Father Fidelis had many friends among his own and among the laity, all of whom were distressed over his long years of suffering and now mourn his passing. R. I. P