

The Sisters and The Bishops

By Sister Joan Marie Stelman

As the Diocese of Duluth celebrates its 125th anniversary this year, it seems an appropriate time to look back on the long, intertwined history that our Community has with the Diocese. If you have read *House of Stone* by Sister Mary Richard Boo, you will know of some of the difficulties that arose in the early 20th century between the Community and episcopal authority. What you may not know is the longer history of the supportive relationship between the Bishops of Duluth and the Sisters.

Bishop McGolrick is considered a co-founder of our Community with Mother Scholastica. It was his invitation to her that started our journey. You may be aware that when we first settled here, our first home was at Munger Terrace. The Sisters occupied half of the structure, and the Chancery offices and the Bishop's residence were in the other half. Even after the Sisters and the girls moved up the hill to our new home, the Bishop was a frequent visitor. There are records of recitals given in his honor, and he would preside over convocation at the beginning of the school year and graduation in the spring. He celebrated the Eucharist on the feast of Corpus Christi when the girls made their First Communion and led the procession. When Mother Scholastica died, he mourned the loss of his dear friend and presided at her funeral.



Bishop McGolrick on the Feast of Corpus Christi with the girls who made their First Communion.



Bishop McGolrick starts a footrace during "Villa Day" at the beginning of the school year in 1912.

The Bishops were considered honorary Presidents of The College of St. Scholastica and continued to preside over major events for decades. Bishop McNicholas thought so highly of the Sisters' teaching abilities that when he became the Archbishop of Cincinnati he asked for the Sisters to come and teach in his diocese.



The Bishop's Banquet at The College of St. Scholastica, December 1945. Bishop Welch is in the center.

Bishop Thomas Welch, who led the Diocese for 33 years, was well known to the Sisters and to the students, who dedicated one of their yearbooks to him. A highlight of the year was always the Bishop's Banquet just before Christmas. In 1938 he consecrated Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel. The Bishop even had his own quarters at the Monastery—and his own housekeeper. If you are facing the Chapel, the winding stairs at the left leading up to the door that enters Stanbrook Hall by the cloister walk was known as the "Bishop's stairs" because his office was the first door on the right in Stanbrook Hall. Bishop Schenk also presided at College events until his health began to fail.



The senior class is presented to Bishop Welch, December 1952



Photo by Sister Therese Carson

A watercolor of St. Gertrude's in Washington, D.C. by Bishop Paul Anderson

Bishop Paul Anderson was another especially good friend. When he would visit Washington, D.C., for any kind of conference, he would stay with the Sisters at St. Gertrude's. He took painting lessons from Sister Mary Charles McGough and became an accomplished watercolor painter. During the sesquimillennium in 1980—the 1500th anniversary of St. Benedict's birth—he was an integral part of the Community celebrations.



Bishop Roger Schwietz, +Sister Lelia Hartung, Bishop Brom, and +Sister Georgene Vukelich visiting in the Monastery dining room.

As time has gone by, schedules and responsibilities have changed; the Sisters do not serve in as many locations in the Diocese where they would encounter the Bishop. Although there has been less personal interaction between the Bishops and our Sisters, we are grateful for their support and involvement with our Community and the ministries we have started.

Bishop Paul Sirba visited with Sisters on Benet Hall shortly after his arrival in Duluth and shook hands with +Sister Devota LaVoie, who was over 100 at the time.

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When he was succeeded by Bishop Robert Brom, work began on a new residence for the Bishop. In the interim, Bishop Brom lived at St. Ann's Home, where Sister Georgene Vukelich was the administrator. He was very grateful for her help and friendship, and he continued to write to her after he became the Archbishop of San Diego until her death. Bishop Brom blessed the new Chapel and Library in 1986. Bishop Roger Schwietz was a frequent visitor to the Monastery, often presiding at Sisters' funerals.



Photo by Sister Edith Bogue