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The Society of St. Columban



A Historical Sketch
By Rev. E. J. McCarthy
St. Columbans, Nebr.

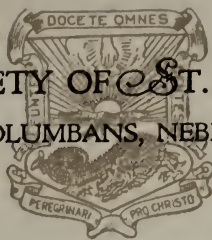
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THE SOCIETY OF ST. COLUMBAN
ST. COLUMBANS, NEBRASKA



April 22nd, 1931.

Dear Father:-

"Priests as a rule are most gullible in making investments, are you any better?" This poser came to me recently from a priest whom I tried to interest in our Annuity Plan. That priests sometimes get badly stung on investments, we all know, but so do bankers. On the other hand, I know priests who have made wonderful investments in their time and a good deal of what you read about in the enclosed booklet was made possible through their ability and charity.

But as a matter of fact we have not the same investment "temptations" that other priests have. If we ever feel like "getting rich quick" to pay off a debt with a profitable looking investment that some "high-power" salesman is trying to force on us, we get a whole lot of "efficacious grace" from our Constitutions and Normae and Articles of Incorporation, not to speak of Canon Law.

With our Society, the investment of funds is not left to any one individual. There is always a Council to vote on each investment and we are obliged to get the best expert advice available. Then we are allowed to invest only in such high-grade securities as are usually recommended for trust funds. Even with all this red tape, we may make a mistake, of course, but it will never be a very serious one. So far, thank God, we have come through the present depression without a single loss.

Just now we hold 274 Annuity Contracts. A large number of these were given us by priests who want Masses said for them when they die. Some stipulate that the interest be used for Masses for the first year or two after their death, others that a definite sum be taken from the principal for that purpose. They know this is their safest plan. There will be no deductions for taxes or legal expenses.

Father, I would like to interest you in our Annuity Plan and I will be glad to send you privately the details of our financial standing. If there's a promising boy or two in your parish whom you think would make good missionaries, ask them to write me and if you send us an annuity or a donation we will be doubly grateful.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

E. J. McCarthy
Superior.

THE HISTORY OF THE

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*Our Lady's Shrine in the main corridor, St. Columban's
Preparatory Seminary, Silver Creek, N. Y.*



The Chapel at St. Columban's Seminary, St. Columbans, Nebraska.

The Society of St. Columban

ON the morning of December 3, 1917, the Feast of St. Francis Xavier by the way, two young priests stood on the steps of the Archbishop's house on Madison Avenue, New York, and inquired if the Cardinal was at home. Yes, but he was busy for the moment. Father Galvin, who was himself to become a bishop ten years later, and better known as the founder of a missionary society, now familiarly called "St. Columban," had come to what he referred to as the "kick-off in an important game."

"It was with fear and trembling, I must confess," he wrote in a letter to a friend, "that I mounted the steps and rang the Cardinal's bell." I always recall this letter with a good deal of consolation, for the feeling is quite a normal one with myself not only when I have to ring a Cardinal's

bell, which I rarely get a chance to do, but even when I ring the bell in a parish house.

In a room of "cardinal red," they spent the time as men in similiar circumstances usually spend it "thinking out pretty little speeches and putting their thoughts in order," all of which subsequently evaporate. There are always paintings to be admired in a Cardinal's reception room, and in this one there were portraits of those great Archbishops with whose names the Archdiocese of New York is linked in history. The Cardinal's secretary looked in once to ask their names and business, and then a second time to say the Cardinal would be down in a moment. "Hughes and Corrigan and all the other great men were forgotten in a moment and Cardinal Farley became the man of the hour." Then he suddenly appeared in the doorway. "There was no room for formal speeches, for the Cardinal was delightfully informal." He made them feel "entirely at home and in the home of a friend."

Yes, he had heard of this new missionary movement in Ireland and he was glad of it; pity it had not started fifty years before, but even now it was not too late. It seemed indeed providential. Father Galvin outlined the story and the Cardinal listened. "Yes, it is wonderful," he said, "but Ireland has never turned a deaf ear to an appeal made in such a cause." He gave them a letter authorizing them to collect funds in the Archdiocese, and next morning the mail brought a personal check from His Eminence. A new missionary movement was launched in the United States.

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SIX years before, Father Galvin knew Manhattan; he knew Brooklyn better, for the first years of his priesthood were spent there at Holy Rosary Church. In those six years many interesting things had happened in his life and other lives now associated with him. For one thing he had felt that strange imperative impulse we call a missionary vocation and which few can understand who have not felt its urgent insistence. It casts caution and human prudence to the winds, tramples on ties that are nearest and dearest and goes out over the dark places of the earth to bring souls into touch with the Infinite Source of Light and Life.

For four years, from 1912 to 1916, he worked as a missionary in China. He saw there paganism and the fruit of sin in all its dark horror, and the



St. Columban's Seminary, St. Columbans, Nebraska, the Major Seminary of the Society of St. Columban in the United States.

sight saddened him, as it has saddened many another heart before and since. He saw how the missionaries of France were recalled from their missions to become soldiers. He knew that many of them would never return. And as he saw the utter spiritual helplessness of China with all its cruel fearsome superstitions, his thoughts turned to other lands where the Faith was strong and fervent and where men, many of them at least, loved God; to Ireland, where he was born, and to America, where he had lived and worked. In these countries there was a strong, virile Faith. Ireland had a missionary history unparalleled; in America the idea of foreign missions had scarcely begun to stir abroad, but Father Galvin had vision enough to grasp its possibilities.

He began his campaign. He wrote for the *Irish Catholic* and he wrote for the students of Maynooth. His letters were read and published there by a friend whose interest was awakening. If he failed to receive a ready response, he got at least a sympathetic hearing. He wrote constantly for such American papers as *The Lamp* (Graymoor) and the *Brooklyn Tablet*. Two Irish priests joined him in 1915 and their sphere of influence spread to Australia. More than one Australian priest now attributes his missionary vocation to articles that appeared in the *Austral Light* at that period. Something was taking shape. Neither Father Galvin nor his comrades could guess then what the future would bring, and as a matter of fact it far surpassed their wildest dreams. But the ground was being prepared, and in 1916 Father Galvin himself appeared on the scene. In the summer of that year he was in America, in the autumn he was in Ireland.

His first appeal was to Maynooth. It was his *Alma Mater* and, as the national seminary of Ireland, it was a center of spiritual and intellectual culture. This time the response was definite. Four priests joined him, one of them a professor, two from the Dunboyne establishment and an old comrade from his college days. The Bishops approved and the work began. In less than a year it had all the evidence of success. Maynooth subsequently gave the movement two of its professors and three of its Doctors of Divinity. Father Galvin could now turn to America, and he did. So we find him this winter morning, a little over a year since he left China, jumping on a street car in Madison Avenue, with a Cardinal's letter in his pocket.



The Chapel at St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary, Silver Creek, N. Y.

IT is no easy matter to found a religious society. One needs courage and a great many other things, but especially courage, or, rather, one must be unconscious of possible difficulties. Too much prudence is often as bad as none at all. Father Galvin rarely saw difficulties in those days. "Keep going until you're held dead up," was his motto as he often expressed it, and to give him his due, he put it into practice consistently enough and managed to keep going.

Early in 1918 he started out West, for one reason because the East was already crowded with religious projects, and even missionary ones were already taking shape there. Besides, war fever was at its height and even good Churchmen saw no particular hurry about the conversion of China. But, like every other passing mood, the war fever passed and the conversion of China goes on. As a matter of fact, the first donations Father Galvin received were Liberty Bonds and later on they helped to put the Society on its feet. But his immediate need was a suitable headquarters, and possibly he had some preconceived notions of what the word "suitable" implied. That these ideas were not realized, we know, and, looking



*St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary, Silver Creek, N. Y., as seen from the
New York State Highway.*

back now, with an intimate knowledge of the story of St. Columbans in later years we are not sorry. Providence has a way of its own.

There was in Omaha at the time an Archbishop who had just been transferred from the Philippines, where he had left after him a fine record of achievement. Archbishop Harty was appointed to the Archdiocese of Manila in that difficult period following American occupation. There were tangles to be unraveled in the relations between Church and State. It took him thirteen years to do it and, incidentally, wrecked his health. Then Rome recalled him and made him Bishop of Omaha. Father Galvin knew of his work in Manila. He was a missionary and he might be expected to receive a missionary kindly. So Father Galvin came to Omaha.

The Archbishop thought the matter over, as one might expect an Archbishop to do, and from my knowledge of him in later years, I know he prayed over it. Whatever his sympathies might be it was no small thing to sponsor a movement like the one Father Galvin outlined. This was on March 25th, (in Ireland they call it Lady Day). The following day Father Galvin called on the Archbishop again to find that the result of his thought and prayer was this, "Father, I have only one doubt, I'm afraid Omaha isn't big enough for a work like yours." Father Galvin had no such fear, and, I must confess, his successor never felt very cramped in this little western city of a quarter of a million.

He rented an office and bought a typewriter, a desk, a table and a couple of chairs. The story goes, and I believe it is true, that when he reached Omaha he had only a few hundred dollars in his pocket that he begged from his friends in the East. In those days of war prices I imagine he had little left when he hung his sign on the door. But that was one of his least worries. He wrote to a friend, "Thank God, we have a little place of our own at last where we are free to do almost anything we like, provided we don't set the building on fire. It is a room twenty by ten, with two large windows, plenty of light and air, fresh and otherwise. We have fixed our camp in the center of the city. We pay eighteen a month and they give us the noise gratis." And so St. Columbans in the United States began.



On the Seminary Grounds at Silver Creek there are leafy woods where students spend many a pleasant hour.

TOWARDS the end of the year 1918 Father Galvin left Omaha for Ireland and Rome, and I became his successor. From now on I shall speak as "we", for whatever has been accomplished since has been due, under God, not to any one man but to the united efforts and co-operation of the priests who have formed the personnel of St. Columbans in the United States.

Our first home in Omaha was a fair-sized frame house on a five-acre plot near what was then the outskirts of the city. Later we added a chapel and a few additional rooms and it was here that we opened our first seminary in 1921. For two months we had only one student, then two more came along and then a fourth, but he got lonesome and I could never blame him. Two others came in the course of the year and left again, but the original three remained and they are priests now.

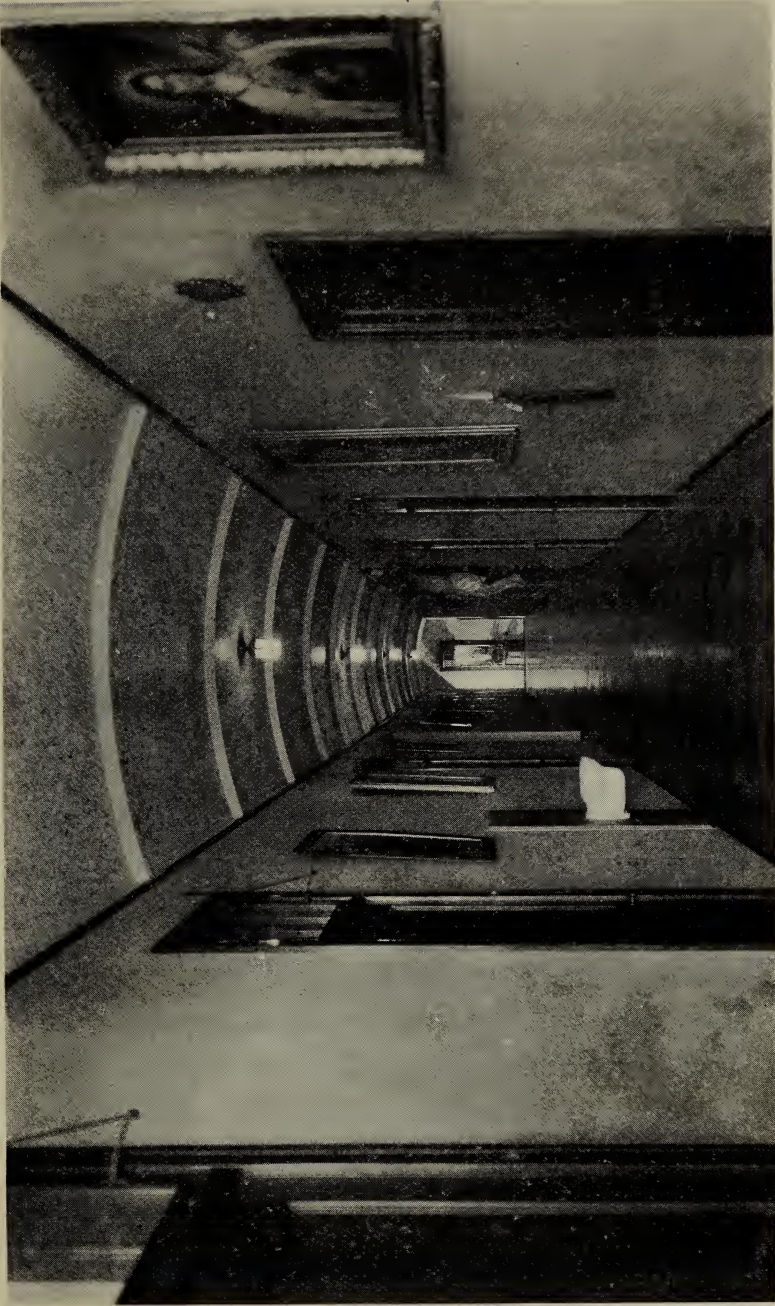
We knew all about Bethlehem, at least we had read about it, but it is not so easy to live it humbly in a country like ours where success is judged

by numbers and buildings. "Only three students," and the good Sister threw up her hands, "my, but what on earth are you all doing?" If she only knew! In this advertising age one must do something better or worse, or at least more remarkable, than anyone else to attract any notice at all. We were doing things, not only less remarkable than others but we were actually following the ordinary hum-drum humble beginnings of every similar movement since the Holy Family went down to Egypt. Looking back now, of course, all this is very clear, but it needed faith to see it at the time.

It must have been something like this the Archbishop had in mind when he laid the foundation stone of our new seminary on September 8, 1921. For a sermon he read to us the whole of the eleventh chapter of St. Paul to the Hebrews—"Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for," and so on. He was himself a man of great faith.

The building went up quickly enough. It was finished in May, 1922, and dedicated on June 29th. We had twelve students in September. The missionary spirit that came in later years had not yet gripped the soul of the American boy. For a year they came and went. St. Columbans, I must admit, was not a very inviting place in those days. It was a new building on a bare, bleak hill, without a single tree or shrub of any kind except a few that had just been planted. Omaha was nine miles away and a street car, an unpaved road and an old Ford were our means of communication. In very bad weather they did not always communicate. Visitors to St. Columbans today find a hill covered with trees and shrubs and are amazed to hear that they have grown there since 1922, far more than when you tell them that seventy-five years ago the Omaha Indians roamed free over the land on which St. Columbans now stands. The street car is still running and we have a concrete highway and our mode of conveyance has been advanced into the six-cylinder class. We find it more economic, especially in patience.

St. Columbans, as I have said, is built on a hill, and the hill looks down on a long, wide valley through which a river flows. It would have been the longest river in the world had it been called the Mississippi instead of the Missouri, but when it got its name, there were no modern journalists with an over-developed sense of the extraordinary, and so it is just what the unlettered Indians knew it as, "The Big Muddy." Even an Indian



The Students' Corridor at St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary, Silver Creek, showing the Shrine of Our Lady at the end and the Crucifix of Limpias on the right.



The Calvary at St. Columbans, Nebraska, in mid-winter.

could scarcely miss such an obvious name. From St. Columbans though, two miles away, it looks quite picturesque, but then we rarely go near it except in the springtime when the ice in Dakota is breaking up and the floes are drifting down in a mad, wild whirl. For once in the year a close-up of the Missouri is fascinating. But, all things considered, the view from St. Columbans, the rolling country to the west, the woods, the fields in summer, the snows in winter would be rather hard to beat. Visitors, at least, speak admiringly of it, and sometimes one even suspects a little note of jealousy when they tell you on a nice, cool summer day, "I'll bet it's cold here in the winter." We cannot deny it, even if we wanted to, but at St. Columbans we have little time to think of cold or heat. We just try to keep going "till we're held dead up."

One of the things we are very proud of at St. Columbans is what we call the Calvary Walk. Like the rest of the hill, it was a bare, bleak treeless place in 1922, but now there is plenty of shade on the long white walk between the elms, and beside it there is a wide cliff-like bank of



One of the delightfully interesting features of the Preparatory Seminary at Silver Creek is its Cloister Garden.



*The Students' Dining Room at St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary,
Silver Creek, N. Y.*

thick shrubbery where the birds can sing their love songs and build their nests. Down at one end of a vista is the Calvary silhouetted against the sky and set in a dark green frame of cedars. The figure on the Crucifix is modeled after the "Holy Christ" of Limpias, that famous shrine in Spain where infidels and atheists have miracles performed for them before their eyes. At one side, cut into the hill is a Lourdes grotto, the gift of a client of Mary. During our Laymen's Retreats in the summertime, which by the way are a regular feature of our activity at St. Columbans, the grotto is illuminated for the closing Benediction. Those who have been present at that scene never forget it.

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VERY soon after building St. Columbans, within a few months in fact, we found that a preparatory seminary was a necessity. The studies for the priesthood are long and difficult and the spiritual life and self-discipline especially require a training that is not given in ordinary high



A Group of Students at St. Columban's Major Seminary, St. Columbans, Nebraska



*The View from the Tower at St. Columban's Preparatory
shores of Lake Erie, and out*

schools or colleges, intended, as they are, for a very different kind of education. The solution of this new problem was what we now call "Silver Creek," the Society's preparatory seminary that takes its name from the neighboring town in western New York. Silver Creek and St. Columban's were acquired in very different ways. The latter was an ordinary business transaction. The land belonged to a Presbyterian College that for some reason had ceased to function. Just to make sure of it at a reasonable price, it was bought under the name of an individual and then transferred to the Society. At Silver Creek there was something more—something that, as I think, showed a definite Providence in the background.

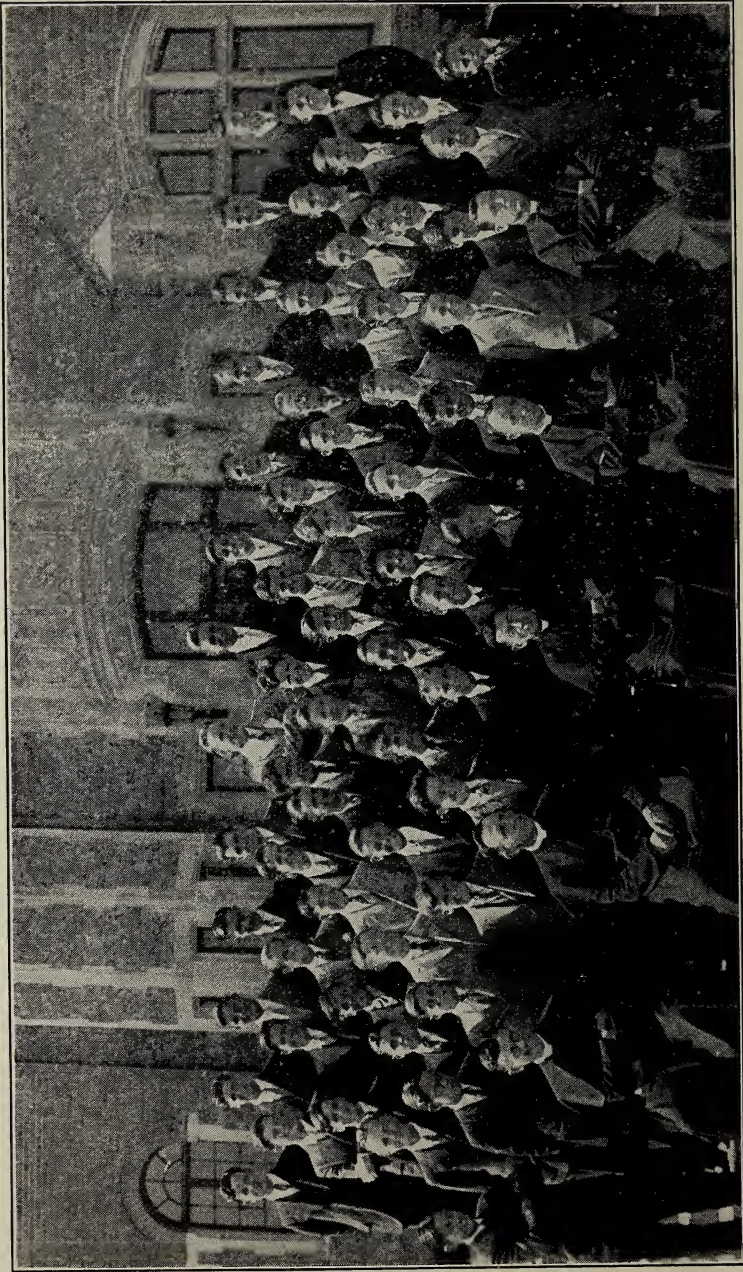
We had two fixed ideas about the site. The first was that the Diocese of Buffalo was the most desirable place in all America for a junior seminary. It is the center of that great thickly populated Catholic section along the Atlantic seaboard, that we westerners call "down East." Fortunately, as indeed we expected, the Bishop of Buffalo agreed with us. The second idea we had was that it should be near a railroad center and a state highway and that it should have some scenic attractions, an im-



*ary, Silver Creek, stretches away for miles along the wooded
a wide expanse of blue water.*

portant, though perhaps much neglected factor in the growth of a boy's mind. There was only one place in the Diocese of Buffalo, I believe, that fulfilled all these requirements and we found it at Silver Creek. When we bought the property indeed we had everything but the highway, but in New York one does not wait long for such things. Now a fine concrete road runs along the Lake front within a few hundred feet of our new seminary. Beside it Lake Erie stretches away north into the horizon and we find plenty of scenic attractions in its changing moods. If you happen to be going by, remember you will always find the latch off the door, that is, after you ring the bell, and there is always something in the icebox for a "friendly stranger."

Personally I thank Our Lady for Silver Creek, and I would not feel that I had done my duty in this little sketch without giving testimony to the fact. It happened in this way—not very convincing perhaps to others but very much so to me. After looking over several places that could be bought, and some that could not, we decided to take an option on a place about twenty miles east of Buffalo on the state highway. It had a great many things to recommend it and, though I was never really



A Group of Students at St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary, Silver Creek, N. Y.

satisfied with it, there seemed to be nothing else to do. Though the Silver Creek property had just come into the market, we had not seen it. It was too far away, at least that was how it appeared then. Now there is a little custom I have had for many years, possibly twenty or more, and I recommend it to you. Before undertaking any important work recite the Litany of Our Lady of Good Counsel. If you say it every day, all the better. On this particular occasion it caused so much uneasiness in my mind that I began to feel there was something wrong and "Silver Creek" kept ringing through my brain with an insistence that I could not deny. To put the matter, as it were, beyond all doubt, when we went to close the option the owner raised the option price. Next day we went to Silver Creek. It was a warm Sunday in August and the Lake looked cool and sparkling. This was just the thing we had been looking for, but the owner, a ruddy, comfortable-looking son of the South, whose father, he told us, was a priest in the Greek Church, had a rather exaggerated idea of its value. For the moment I thought the deal was off.

A few months later we returned. This time the owners, (for we learned that the Greek was only one side of the picture) were in a more reasonable mood. There were other circumstances in the background which have no interest for us now, though they did at the time. Eventually we bought the place for fifty-five thousand dollars less than they had asked for it three months before. There was a large frame house on the property in pretty good repair, and a nice orchard, twenty acres of grapes and a few hundred acres of land more or less. It was formerly the summer home of a New York lawyer. I merely state that as a fact, and I know it because he left some volumes of New York statutes and some Sunday school sermon books in his library. He evidently had a hobby. But New York statutes go out of date quickly and the sermons that this particular lawyer possessed were never really in date, so they were not considered in the purchase price. There were a few small houses and chicken coops and they were of far more value to us.

The seminary, such as it was, opened in September, 1924. It was dedicated by Bishop Turner on the Feast of the Holy Rosary. We had twenty-four students, some of whom had come from St. Columbans, again reducing our student body there to four. The following year things began to hum. The enrollment at Silver Creek ran up to thirty, then to



The Chinese Room at St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary, Silver Creek, furnished in Chinese fashion with furniture and tapestries made in China.

forty. The chicken coops were brought into service, cleaned and remodeled—any port in a storm. We were faced with the problem of a new building, but the problem was all we had. The Society had already too heavy a debt, so the old houses and the chicken coop had to do for five more years, until in September, 1929, our present new building was completed, thanks to the generosity of our friends. The foundation stone was laid on the Feast of the Holy Rosary again—the fourth anniversary of the dedication of the old house, and the following year, September 12th, the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary, the new building was dedicated. The Bishop of Buffalo, God bless him, was there on all three occasions. This time Silver Creek had forty-five students. In 1930 it opened with sixty-five, bringing the total student body of St. Columbans in the United States from three students in 1921 to eighty-three in 1930, and it is still growing.



View of St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary, Silver Creek, N. Y., from the west at a point where the grounds jut out into Lake Erie.



*One of the three dormitories at St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary,
Silver Creek, N. Y.*

LET us return to Father Galvin. We left him on his way to Rome. It was not his first visit, for he went there in 1917 to obtain the Pope's approval for his project. In 1919 he met Benedict XV again and this time the Holy Father assigned him a mission field. China is a big country and the activity of man is limited, so the Vicar of Christ divides the Master's Vineyard. Hanyang was the little corner where Father Galvin and the priests who followed him were to reap the harvest. It is a squalid Chinese city of half a million souls, six hundred miles up the Yangtze, in the Province of Hupeh. Around it is a densely populated district of ten thousand square miles with six or seven millions, as millions are counted in China, where one or two ciphers more or less make little difference. He entered the mission field again in the following year, 1920, traveling via the United States with a band of fifteen priests. A few years later the Holy See appointed him Prefect Apostolic and then a Bishop.

As the new Society, now Pontifical, and immediately dependent on the Holy See, found itself developing rapidly, other missions were soon established, not only in China, but also in the Philippine Islands. The invitation to the latter field came from Archbishop O'Doherty of Manila, suc-



The Calvary Walk at St. Columban's Seminary, St. Columbans, Nebraska.



The Gymnasium at St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary, Silver Creek, N. Y.

cessor to the man who, more than anyone else, had helped to establish St. Columbans in the United States. We are pleased with this little link of circumstance, and I am sure the soul of the Archbishop too is glad.

Down in Kiangsi, five hundred miles from Hanyang, another group of Columban missionaries are now at work. It was there that the Society received its baptism of blood when Father Leonard was killed by bandits in 1929. In all these missions steady progress has been made, in spite of difficulties, and our priests have gathered 'round them groups of fervent Catholics who can stand persecucion, as proved by the fact that they have already stood it. Wars and revolution, and all the hateful things that go with them, have stalked throughout China in these first years of gathering hope. That it would come sometime, we knew, but it came sooner than we expected. St. Columbans and its new converts have already been tested, and thank God they have stood the test. War clouds may yet hang over China for many a year, but the future is bright because the hearts of the ordinary people are good. They are unspoiled and simple and poor, all of which must make them very dear to the heart of our Saviour.

A WORD now about the Saint from whom St. Columbans takes its name. St. Columban was an Irish missionary, that is, he was born in Ireland, though he spent the greater part of his life as a missionary in Europe. He died early in the seventh century and was buried in northern Italy, after preaching the Gospel for forty years in the countries that are now France, Germany and Switzerland. There is not one of us who does not owe him something, for his influence has come down to us in that most precious thing a human soul can possess—its faith in God and its hope in a happy immortality. St. Columban was selected as the patron of St. Columbans because he best represents what, we all think, its spirit should be—the spirit of dauntless courage and sacrifice for the love of God.

No matter what we might say about Columban's place in history, it could never be more significantly described than it has been by Pius XI on the occasion of the Saint's thirteenth centenary: "St. Columban," the Holy Father writes, "is to be reckoned among those distinguished and exceptional men whom Divine Providence is wont to raise up in the most difficult periods of human life to restore causes almost lost. This illustrious son of Ireland worked within no narrow limits. As scholarship throws an increasing light on the obscurity of the Middle Ages, the more clearly is it manifest that the renaissance of all Christian science and culture in many parts of France, Germany and Italy is due to the labors and zeal of St. Columban—a demonstration to the glory of the whole Church and more particularly of Catholic Ireland."

In many ways China today is something like what Europe was in the days of Columban, a wild, lawless, pagan world. It needed courage then, as now, to leave a peaceful homeland and preach the Gospel of peace and love in a land that was war-ridden and in ruins. It was a still harder thing to quell the hates of fierce tribes and transplant among them the spiritual life he knew at Bangor. Yet all this was what Columban did and his work will never die, for to him the men from the Rhineland and the Alps, from Lombardy and France, so many of whom have fathered the children of the Faith in America, may trace their great inheritance.

The Society of St. Columban indeed reflects his work and spirit in quite a remarkable way. Like him, it was born in Ireland; but, as in the course of Columban's life he gathered round him missionaries of many lands, French or German or Italian, so with St. Columbans. Towards the end of his life he would have gone to Poland had not Providence turned his footsteps southwards. What he desired, St. Columbans, in the course of time, has done. It has gathered the children of every Catholic people of western Europe within its walls.



*Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto beside the Calvary Walk at St. Columban's Seminary,
St. Columbans, Nebraska.*

Recently we took a census of the students of St. Columbans and Silver Creek by nationality of origin and this is what it shows: Irish blood predominates, with German a good second; then, in order, come Polish, French, English, Scotch, Slovak and Italian. But the same spirit that knew no difference of race in Europe in the seventh century recognizes no distinction in nationality or blood in America in the twentieth.

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THE student life at St. Columbans is happy. It is happy because of the common bond of friendship and fellowship that naturally binds men who are striving for a great ideal, for the highest of all ideals, to be one in Christ and to bring Him close to other human souls. Of hard work there is plenty. The beginnings of a lasting education have to be laid deep and sound. At first our boys find it difficult. It is different from the education they have been accustomed to in other schools, for the world trains men only for success in this life. Education for the priesthood must go deep down into the well-springs of life's problems. All his life the priest is dealing with things that reach under the surface of human nature; things that are deep and hidden and spiritual, like the soul. His mind must be taught to dig under the surface of physical realities and fathom those mystical and supernatural realities that lie beyond. His training must be essentially different from the outset. For this reason one of the greatest mistakes a boy could make is to delay his preparatory studies for the priesthood. He is not merely wasting time, but he is taking too serious a risk with a precious gift from God and when he comes to St. Columbans it is more than likely that he must begin all over again. The proper age to enter St. Columbans is at the end of grade school, and the average boy knows his mind at that age far better than he will three years later. Strange as this may sound, it is the general experience of every priest who has to deal with vocations. If a boy is not sure, he can find out in a seminary better than anywhere else and he is always free to leave.

The preparatory seminary lays the foundation—five years Classics and Science. Then comes what is called the spiritual year. It is really equivalent to a novitiate, but as the Society of St. Columban is not an Order, but a Society of secular priests, we give it a different name. The spiritual year is not difficult, but it is an entirely new experience in a boy's life. It begins with a thirty days' retreat that is spent in meditating in silence, chiefly on the life and virtues of Our Lord, the model of every priest. The remainder of the year is devoted to spiritual studies, character building and the study and practice of those virtues necessary for the work of a missionary in after life. It is a time of prayer and work, a time when



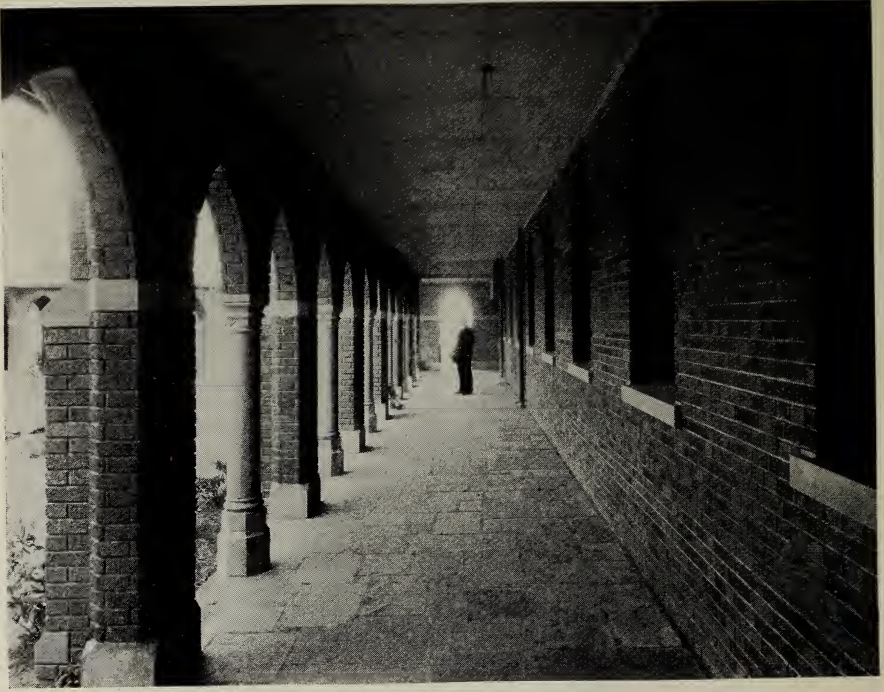
*One of the Class Halls at St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary,
Silver Creek, N. Y.*

the great truths of faith become convictions, a time of great joy, of surprises and spiritual adventure. It changes a man's outlook, gives him a true perspective of values and he comes out of it immeasurably nearer to God. The foundation has now been laid, the mind has become strong and clear and thoughtful. The soul develops balance and poise and the aspirant to the priesthood, with a strong good will faces the second half of his studies where knowledge still beckons to him.

Philosophy is the next branch of study. It gives him a grasp of the great fundamental problems of the universe. He begins to see mysteries where he thought there were none. That in itself is an education. The average unthinking man remains far from God because he fails to recognize the mysteries of every day, mysteries of growing things, of light and darkness and of the starry heavens at night. But the student of Philosophy investigates these things. He tries to penetrate the mysteries of mind and matter, of soul and body. He learns how to think. He studies the vast cosmic system and becomes familiar with its known laws. He ponders over the ultimate constituents of things. He compares and analyses theories of being and morality and through reason alone attempts



Eagle Bay, a little inlet of Lake Erie at St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary giving delightful facilities for boating, swimming and skating in season.



The Gothic Cloisters give St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary the additional charm of a monastic atmosphere.

even to grasp the knowledge of the Infinite. Two years are all too short, indeed, to study these mysterious problems that the combined intellects of the scientists of the world have scarcely begun to penetrate. But life is short and the work of Christ is calling to the young soul.

The next step brings him from Philosophy to Theology. In Philosophy the student never appeals to Revelation to aid him in his search for truth. He depends on reason alone and on his methods of reasoning. Theology is based primarily on Revelation supported by reason, and is therefore the more exalted science because the truths that are discovered depend on the infallible word of God. In Philosophy there may be doubt; in Theology there is none. It is the study of God's Revelation to man in all its infinitely complex variety, but at the end of four years the student has little more than begun to grasp the vastness of a field that has already been traversed so thoroughly by the world's greatest minds. The years of his priesthood will bring him a deeper understanding of these hidden mysteries of God, until in death the veil is lifted and his soul will find its happiness in contemplating them through eternity.

The whole course takes twelve years, but the time goes quickly and happily, for each day brings new courage and the joy of a life that is being lived for God.

At our preparatory seminary two very important departments—the kitchen and the infirmary—are under the excellent supervision of the Sisters of St. Columban. Good health is an essential condition of every boy who aspires to be a missionary priest, and the Sisters do their part to maintain that good health by providing our students with proper wholesome food. But even healthy boys get sick—nothing serious you know—little aches and bruises, coughs and colds, and a little care from experienced hands, sanctified with a prayer, just at the right time, may save a lot of suffering in later life. Here again the Sisters' work is supreme.

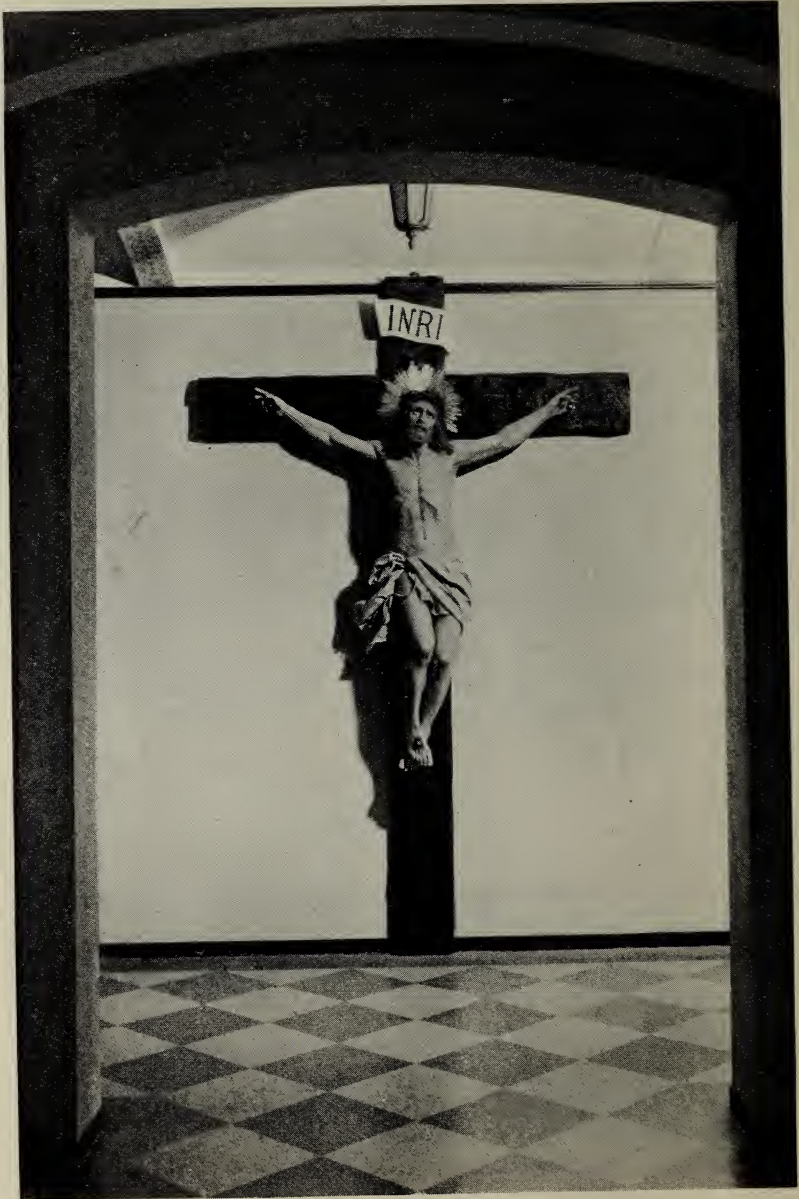
Of course there is plenty of play, for play is necessary for happiness, and without happiness there can be no real work. At Silver Creek our gymnasium is the envy of many a secular college. A mile and a half of the shore line of Lake Erie belongs to the Society and the swimming is excellent in the summertime; so is the skating in the winter when Eagle Bay is frozen over with a deep strong coat of smooth ice. At St. Columbans there is football and handball and basketball and hiking and there is always the joyful ring of laughing at recreation and somewhere the sound of a violin or a mandolin or a jewsharp or a mouth organ. There are plays and concerts and free days enough to lighten the burdens of young lives. St. Columbans, both of them, are happy places where only happy men should live.

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ALL this is what that young priest who stood on the steps of the Cardinal's house in New York on a winter's morning in 1917 called into being. The official statistics of the Society of St. Columban in 1930 read as follows:

Priests	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	143
Students	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	200
Lay Brothers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
								<hr/>
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	354

When you try to realize what it costs in will power and sacrifice to give up home and friends and become a missionary, to spend one's life in a place like China, you will agree that there is something more than human in success like this in a little more than a decade.



The Crucifix of Limpias in the main corridor at St. Columban's Preparatory Seminary, Silver Creek, N. Y., is an exact replica of the famous miraculous Crucifix at Limpias in Spain.

