

## FATHER KELLY'S SILVER JUBILEE

---

Father Francis Louis Kelly, O. P., has been in the penitentiary for the last twenty-two years.

Ordinarily this statement might seem rather a dubious compliment. But on the 1st of November last, when Father Kelly, Chaplain of the Ohio State Penitentiary, celebrated the Silver Jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood, his record at the jail was the brightest jewel in his priestly crown. On that occasion he was the recipient of the Papal Blessing conveyed to him in a letter from the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV. Moreover the kind and saintly Bishop of Columbus, Right Rev. James J. Hartley, D. D., the Very Rev. Raymond Meagher, O. P., Provincial of St. Joseph's Province, and Very Rev. A. L. McMahon, O. P., Provincial of the Dominicans in the West, as well as the Governor of Ohio, the Mayor of Columbus, the Warden of the State Penitentiary, and a host of others prominent in clerical circles and civic life vied in telling of their love and admiration for the revered Chaplain of the Ohio State Penitentiary.

The anniversary was celebrated with a Solemn High Mass at Saint Patrick's Church, Columbus, Ohio. Father Kelly was celebrant of the Mass. The deacon was the Very Rev. James Aldridge, O. P., Prior of St. Mary's Convent, New Haven, Conn., the subdeacon was Very Rev. M. S. Welsh, O. P., President of Aquinas College, Columbus. The Very Rev. D. J. Kennedy, O. P., Regent of Studies at the College of the Immaculate Conception, Catholic University, Washington, D. C., and Very Rev. J. A. Hinch, O. P., Prior of St. Antoninus' Convent, Newark, N. J., were deacons of honor to Bishop Hartley, who was present in the sanctuary and who preached an eloquent sermon on the Priesthood, in which he took occasion to commend most highly the wonderful work of the Jubilarian. After the Mass a banquet was served in the church rectory at which the Rt. Rev. Bishop and a large number of Father Kelly's friends, including many fellow priests and brother Dominicans from all parts of the country, were present.

A unique souvenir of the happy event was gotten out by the Rev. T. L. Crowley, O. P., Pastor of St. Patrick's Church, Columbus. It is a little booklet, the cover of which represents a prison. Father Kelly's genial countenance peers out the front cover through the prison bars. The booklet contains the Pope's letter imparting the Papal Blessing, also letters from Bishop Hartley,

the Dominican Provincials, Father Meagher and Father McMahon, and letters of appreciation and felicitation from the Governor of Ohio, Hon. James M. Cox, from the Mayor of Columbus, Hon. George J. Karb, and from Warden P. E. Thomas, of the Ohio State Penitentiary. Two delightful little poems, "The Silver Years," by Father Crowley, and "Our Chaplain," by Father F. A. Gaffney, O. P., and a short sketch of St. Catherine's Chapel complete the souvenir.

Another feature of the celebration "unannounced on the program," as they say, and perhaps not intended for public notice took place at St. Patrick's Rectory in the evening. Father Kelly was escorted to the refectory attached to the house. Arrived at the supper table he found himself solitary and alone. Then at a signal from an eminent and erudite professor (whose name we cannot divulge), about a dozen of Father Kelly's friends entered the room in lock-step and garbed in the stripes of the prison. They marched thrice in a circle about Father Kelly, who, recovering from his surprise, enjoyed the spectacle immensely. Then at another signal from their leader who handled his baton with the grace of a Sousa, the quasi "chain-gang" struck up that old familiar ballad dear to every Irish heart, "Has Anybody Here Seen KELLY?"

Father Kelly was born in Minneapolis, Minn., April 5, 1851. After completing his education he took up a business career in which he met with a larger measure of success than comes to most men. At the age of thirty-six, hoping to become a priest, he entered the Dominican Convent of St. Rose, Springfield, Ky., where after a year of novitiate, Brother Louis, as he was known in religion, took his first vows on the feast of Saint Dominic, 1888. The studies of all priestly candidates in the Order were undertaken and pursued with zeal and earnestness. The reward of his prayer and labor came, when on November 1, 1892, he was elevated to the Holy Priesthood by Bishop John A. Waterson, at St. Joseph's Priory, Somerset, Ohio. The newly ordained was assigned to St. Dominic's Church, Denver, Colorado. There he was stationed but a short time when he was transferred to St. Patrick's Church, Columbus. Here he has remained ever since, and uninterruptedly for the past twenty-two years he has filled the post of Chaplain in the Ohio State Penitentiary, where his name is held in benediction by inmates and officials alike.

An adequate account of Father Kelly's labors at the Penitentiary would make a story more thrilling than many a mon-

ument of fiction. When a little over a score of years ago he first took up the duties entrusted to him, uncongenial indeed were his surroundings and unencouraging the outlook. The quarters assigned the chaplain for carrying on his spiritual work were not only unfitted to the purpose, but in a sense were disgusting as well. He found old time methods of correction in full sway. His best efforts were often viewed with suspicion and distrust.

Today things are different. Through Father Kelly's efforts a Catholic chapel building adorns the prison. It is dedicated to the Dominican Saint Catherine of Siena, and is the best, most beautiful and well appointed prison chapel in the United States. In the old days, few were the confessions Father Kelly was called upon to hear. Now, every Saturday more than a hundred kneel before him in the tribunal of Penance, and on Sunday have the happy privilege of receiving the Divine Prisoner of the Tabernacle. The yearly Confirmation class averages sixty or seventy members; and during his chaplaincy Father Kelly has baptized over a thousand prisoners. A flourishing Holy Name Society among the men is a pride of the good priest's heart.

Father Kelly has wrought effective and humanitarian reforms in the correction of the prisoners and has done it in such a way that the splendid discipline of the institution has been in no way impaired. He succeeded after long agitation in having a school established which the inmates attend daily and which has proven of immense value. A library of several thousand volumes is another accomplishment of the energetic chaplain.

A noteworthy proof of Father Kelly's influence is a great pile of letters he has received from those who after their discharge keep up correspondence with the priest whose best efforts were for their spiritual and temporal welfare, and whom they look back upon as the one ray of sunshine in the dark days that were. Father Kelly is recognized as an authority on prison reform, and recently visited all the large institutions of the country studying methods of penal administration.



The novices of the House of Studies tender their sincerest congratulations, and pray from their hearts that God may continue to bless the work of the kindly and fatherly Chaplain of the Ohio State Penitentiary.

Dear Father Kelly: "May the silver years of your service indeed lengthen into the days of a Golden Jubilee."

—Justin McManus, O. P.