



Rt. Rev. John T. McNicholas, O. P., S. T. M., Bishop of Duluth

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## THE RIGHT REV. JOHN T. McNICHOLAS, O. P., S. T. M.

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Happy was the Dominican family when on July 21 the secular press announced that the Very Rev. John T. McNicholas, O. P., S. T. M., Socius to the Master General of the Order, had been appointed by His Holiness Pope Benedict XV to succeed the late Right Rev. James McGolrick, D. D., in the episcopal see of Duluth, Minn.

It is needless to introduce to our readers Bishop-elect McNicholas, whose indefatigable zeal in laboring for the Church and his Order has bound to him by unbreakable ties the hearts of all Catholics and of every Dominican.

Born in the town of Kiltimagh, County Mayo, Ireland, December 15, 1877, he was soon brought to America by his parents, who established their home in Chester, Pa. He received his primary education in the Immaculate Heart of Mary School of that city. While pursuing his classical studies at St. Joseph's College, Philadelphia, he made the acquaintance of the late Very Rev. C. H. McKenna, O. P., P. G., who was soon to become the guide of the future Bishop in the choice of his vocation; and later, to be his teacher in the principles which underlie the extensive work accomplished by each of them for the Holy Name Society. Their mutual friendship was ended only by the death of Father McKenna, in 1917.

Bishop McNicholas entered the novitiate at St. Rose Convent, Kentucky, and was professed on October 10, 1895. His deep love of Dominican ideals, his great talent and religious devotion attracted the attention of vigilant superiors who foresaw a promising career before the young novice. He began the study of the Sacred Sciences at the Kentucky convent and in 1896 continued them in the pioneer priory of Ohio, St. Joseph's, where finally, October 10, 1901, he was raised to the holy priesthood.

After ordination Bishop McNicholas was sent abroad to pursue his higher studies at the famous Convent of the Minerva, Rome. At this center of Dominican traditions the student priest specialized in Canon Law. He also received the degree of Lector in Sacred Theology.

Having been honored with the Lectorate, he received a summons from America to teach at the Somerset House of Studies. Here Bishop McNicholas was appointed Master of Novices, during which term the Schools of Philosophy and Theology were transferred to the newly erected Dominican College at the Catholic University in Washington, D. C. Work among the novices in the novitiate and in the classroom was a delightful task for His Lordship; and he ever recommended active participation in all literary fields open for the novices.

It was in 1908 that Bishop-elect McNicholas was made National Director of the Holy Name Society in the United States. This Confraternity has ever been under the guidance of the Dominican Order. Being a "man's man" he was successful from the beginning of his activities. By means of a national headquarters established at New York, Bishop McNicholas soon extended the Society to every diocese in the country. He kept in close touch with the Catholic men by the publication of *The Holy Name Journal*.

During his term as Director of the Holy Name Society the new prelate was appointed pastor of St. Catherine's parish, New York City. This position he held from 1913 until 1917, displaying during that time by wise decisions and by his fatherly guidance of parochial affairs a perfect knowledge of pastoral duties. In 1917 he was appointed first prior of the Convent of St. Catherine, in the New York parish, canonically erected a short time before. Bishop McNicholas, while directing Holy Name Society affairs, established a reputation as a retreat master for priests and religious. He also endeavored to bring the different congregations of Dominican Sisters together with a common Rule and Constitution, so that their work would be strengthened and centralized.

The Most Rev. Louis Theissling, O. P., S. T. M., Master General of the Order, in January, 1917, called the Right Rev. Bishop to Rome to act as Assistant General of the Order. The care and the organization of the English-speaking provinces was entrusted to him. It was then that Bishop McNicholas was given

the degree of Master of Sacred Theology and appointed Provincial of Lithuania.

Rome readily appreciated the thorough knowledge of this Dominican Canonist and he became known throughout the Eternal City. He was personally acquainted with Cardinal Gasparri, who was in charge of the editing of the new Code of Canon Law. The American clergy may look forward to able assistance from Bishop McNicholas in securing from the new Code the proper interpretations.

As a writer on Catholic affairs His Lordship has shown breadth and profundity of scholarship. He compiled the popular "Holy Name Manual" and the "Guide for Spiritual Directors of the Holy Name." Brief but complete were his editions on the lives of Dominican Saints. Much interest was always aroused by his timely articles published in Catholic papers and magazines on Dominican devotions and theological questions under discussion.

While Master of Novices Bishop McNicholas founded, in 1907, the Dominican Year Book. This annual, at the suggestion of the Provincial, Very Rev. Raymond Meagher, O. P., S. T. Lr., LL. D., and with much aid from Bishop McNicholas, was succeeded by the quarterly now edited by the novices of the Province, "Dominicana." Not only did Bishop McNicholas help us by his suggestions, but he strengthened us by encouragement. When he departed for Rome we above all felt his absence. His cheering visits, his consoling words, his radiant smile were gone from us to be the inspiration of others. Our sadness was to be the joy of others. We prayed for his success, yet our souls were sorrowful and lonesome for our friend.

Yet one cannot help but recall, when thinking of God's kindnesses to the Dominican Bishop, the sad loss suffered by him when on May 3d of this year, his mother was taken from this life by the Angel of Death. Surrounded by her five sons, fortified by the sacraments from the hands of one of them—her second Dominican son, Rev. Thomas McNicholas, O. P., of New York—she breathed her last, praying for them, and for him, far away from her. Though far away from the deathbed of his dearest friend, Bishop McNicholas accepted his chalice with perfect resignation. When on September 8th the consecrated hands of Cardinal Boggiani, O. P., raise the Very Rev. John T.

McNicholas to the sublime dignity of the episcopacy, there will be before the heavenly throne a beloved mother pleading that the Holy Spirit may descend upon the mitred head of her own dear son, Bishop McNicholas of Duluth.

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The following is data concerning the Diocese of Duluth:

The see, covering an area of 39,439 square miles, was established in 1889 as a suffragan of St. Paul. The first Catholic settlers were French fur traders, who came there about 1660. The city was named after Daniel Greysolon Du Lhut, who settled there in 1679. It was incorporated as a city in 1857.

The most renowned missionaries of this region were Father Hennepin (1680-1683), and Father Cretin (1839). The latter established the first permanent church edifice.

Upon establishment of the see of St. Paul in 1849, Father Cretin was appointed first Bishop. So neglected had the natives been that their good old faith had been almost entirely lost. In May, 1888, the Diocese of St. Paul was made an archdiocese, with the suffragan sees of Duluth, Winona, Fargo and St. Cloud.

The late Right Rev. James McGolrick, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church, Minneapolis, was consecrated at St. Paul on December 27, 1889, as first Bishop of Duluth. There were then nineteen thousand Catholics, three thousand of whom were Indians. He had fifteen secular priests, five regulars, with thirty-four churches, ten stations and eight Indian missions.

In 1918 the see stands as follows: One administrator, forty-nine secular priests, ten religious, forty-two resident pastors, forty-six missions with churches, and thirty-five stations. It has the following educational and charitable institutions: One college and academy for young ladies, one boys' high school, one girls' high school, eleven parochial schools, two hospitals, one orphan asylum, one home for the aged. The Catholic population, according to the latest statistics, is fifty-nine thousand five hundred and forty-one, of whom fifteen hundred are Indians.

Besides the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, there are in Duluth eleven other churches. The present area of the diocese is twenty-two thousand three hundred and fifty-four square miles. There are in the Diocese of Duluth Benedictine and Oblate Fathers, Christian Brothers, and Benedictine Sisters.

—Ambrose Smith, O. P.