

GOLDEN JUBILEE  
OF  
THE VERY REVEREND  
EDWARD GREGORY FITZGERALD, O.P., S.T.M.

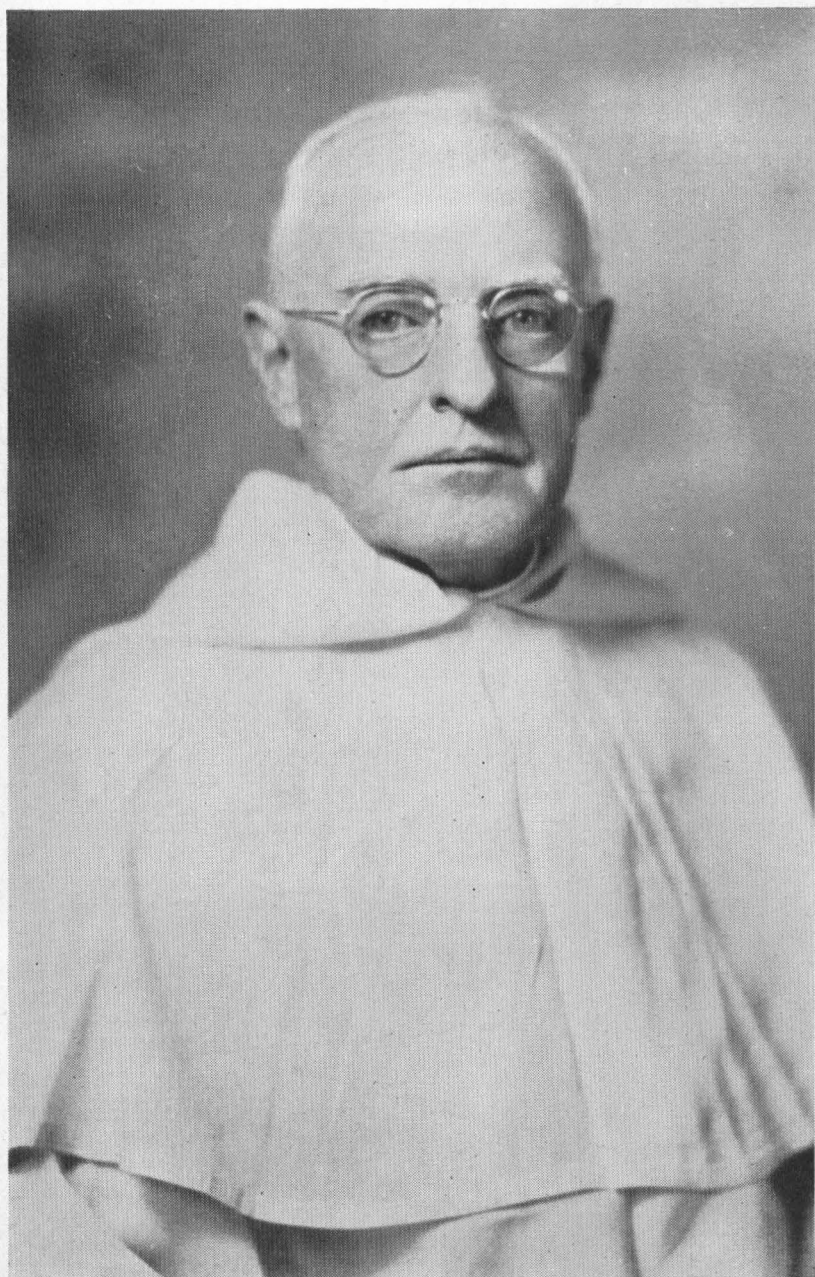


ON THE 5th of April, the Very Rev. Edward Gregory Fitzgerald, O.P., S.T.M., celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood by singing a solemn Mass of thanksgiving in the chapel of the House of Studies in Washington, D. C. The Most Rev. John T. McNicholas, O.P., Archbishop of Cincinnati, and the Most Rev. John M. McNamara, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Washington, D. C., were present. The sermon for the occasion was preached by the Rev. Ignatius Smith, O.P. The Apostolic Benediction was conferred upon the jubilarian in the name of the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, through the Most Reverend Apostolic Delegate to this country, and by the Most Reverend Master General of the Order.

Father Fitzgerald was born in Washington, D. C., August 13, 1875. His parents were Maurice and Mary Ellen King Fitzgerald.

Father Fitzgerald's long priestly career began as professor of Sacred Scripture at St. Joseph's Priory, Somerset, Ohio, after he had received the degree of Lector in Sacred Theology at St. Stephen's Dominican biblical center in Jerusalem. He taught the same subject at the Dominican House of Studies, Washington, D. C., from 1905 until 1910. In the latter year he was elected prior and appointed pastor at St. Vincent Ferrer's church and convent, New York City. During his tenure of office there, the present beautiful church was built.

At the end of his second term at St. Vincent's Father Fitzgerald was elected prior of the House of Studies in Washington. This office he held for two terms, being professor of theology as well as superior of the house. In 1921 the degree of Master in Sacred Theology was conferred upon him. In the following year he was appointed instructor of Sacramental Theology at the Catholic University of America, and in 1925 was promoted to associate professor of theology at the same university. During this period he also served as Chaplain to the University as well as Regent of Studies for the Province of St. Joseph. In 1939, his term as Regent expired. He was thereupon appointed acting Dean of the School of Sacred Theology at the Univer-



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sity, holding this office until he reached the age of retirement required by the University's statutes. In 1941 he resumed his professorial duties at the House of Studies in Washington and still remains an active member of the faculty at that institution. It is Father Fitzgerald's unique distinction of having filled the professorial chair longer than any other man in the history of the Order in the United States.

The text of the sermon preached at the anniversary Mass of thanksgiving is given below :

"Fifty years ago, on April 5, 1898, Edward Gregory Fitzgerald, O.P., was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Watterson in Columbus, Ohio. We who are proud to be numbered among his friends and brothers assemble to assist him in thanking God for his one half a century of distinguished service in the very difficult priesthood of Jesus Christ.

"By the standards of our Lord the priesthood is a difficult calling. The priest must be the "Salt of the Earth" which moral erosion in a pagan world can never weaken. The priest must be the "Light of the World" by which a groping world will be protected from the misery that ensues from apostasy from God and subsequent apostasy from reason. The priest must be a "City on a Mountain" easily discoverable by wayfarers on this earth searching for the happiness which only God can give.

"By the standards of St. Paul the priesthood is a difficult and an exalted state. The priest is a "Man of God," deputized to protect the rights of God in human society. He is the "Dispenser of the Mysteries of God" with divine commission to insure humanity against any attempt to deprive it of divine teaching, divine moral standards or divinely instituted sacraments. The priest is the "Minister of Reconciliation" bringing discordant men together by uniting them with the God of peace. He is the "Physician of the Soul" appointed by God to keep mankind aware of that important contribution of God to human nature, the soul, by which they live, by which they are human, and by which they are Godly. The priest is the "Angel of God," the divinely called messenger who carries God's words of consolation and warning to human society. He is the mediator of intercession, standing with superhuman authority and with super-natural voice before the Almighty and pleading for his people. He is the "Co-laborer with God" for the reconstruction of human society and the progressive advancement of human happiness according to God's plan. He is the "Ambassador of Christ" to plead the cause of Christ before the nations. He is the "Brother of Jesus," "Another Christ," by the kinship of work and of vocation. Thus speaks St. Paul of the priest.

"By the standards of our brother St. Thomas Aquinas, the priesthood is a state of eminence and industry. He calls the priest "an angel" who stands midway between God and men, giving to men the things of God, protecting God's interests among men and representing the interests of mankind before God. He says that "the priest operates in the person of Christ."

"By the standards of the Council of Trent the priesthood is an exalted position. It is divine in origin, the priesthood of Jesus Christ; it is divine in cause, instituted by an act of Christ; it is divine in function since it must carry on the ministry of Christ.

"By the standards of contemporary life and the demands on the priest by contemporary societies the priesthood is an exalted position. The priest must be skilled as a business man and a financier. He must be an architect and a builder, a writer and an expert in public relations. He must be a humanitarian and a leader in social service, patriotism and social relations. He is expected to be a political philosopher and guide, a pulpit orator and radio caster. It is difficult in nineteen hundred years of history to find a period when so much was expected of a Catholic priest as at the present time, even by the enemies of the priesthood.

"By the standards of the Order of Preachers, the priesthood is an exalted life of heroic toil and of eminent learning and sanctity. This order concentrates priestly activity around its central concept of truth. St. Thomas indicates that truth is fourfold; truth of doctrine, truth of life, truth of justice and truth of speech. Traditional Dominican obligations to the truth are expressed in the words "laudare, benedicere, et praedicare," to praise, to bless and to preach the truth. Accommodating St. Thomas' differentiation of truth to the ideals of the priesthood in the Order of Preachers one can say that the ideal of the Dominican Priest is to know the truth in its development and integration by constant study; to live the truth before God and men; to intrench truth in the lives of men by apostolic Catholic action and to communicate the truth by teaching and preaching.

"To meet completely these standards of the priesthood patterned by Christ, by St. Paul, by St. Thomas Aquinas, by the Council of Trent, by contemporary demands and by the Order of Preachers is an almost impossible task. It would be a most discouraging responsibility if God in His beneficence did not raise up from time to time unusual priests whose lives prove to us that the ideals of the priesthood can be met in full measure and that the words of the priesthood can be carried on for the glory of God and His church and for the happiness of mankind. It is this thought that lends added significance to this event and



leads us not only to thank God but to thank our Jubilarian for having translated for fifty years the ideals of the priesthood into practical patterns for our daily imitations.

"Father Edward Gregory Fitzgerald has endeared himself to us as a great teacher. Trained as a Theologian under great masters, a master of Sacred Theology and an expert in Scripture studied at Jerusalem, he spent most of his life in teaching these subjects with distinction in the Dominican Studia and at the Catholic University of America. I can testify from personal experience that he was a superb teacher. He never stopped learning and with the science of a master he achieved a simplicity of presentation that only a master teacher could accomplish. His enthusiasm for his subject was infectious and his students offered him no problem of discipline or industry.

"As an administrator in academic work, both here as Regent of Studies and at the Catholic University as Dean of the school of Sacred Theology he was beloved both by the students and by members of the faculties. Friendly, sympathetic with human weakness, tireless in maintaining personal contacts, dedicated to the principal that educational institutions must be conducted for the benefit of students, just, humane and ever gentlemanly it was a delight to work with and for him.

"As an administrator in religious matters he was equally superb. As Prior of St. Vincnet Ferrer's in New York for six years and as Prior of this community for six years he rendered distinguished service to the church and to his Order. He planned the present church of St. Vincent Ferrer, thought by many to be the finest Gothic Church in the nation. He showed his financial genius in collecting the funds by which it was possible to begin that project and, as Procurator and Prior here, by his success in keeping this college solvent in days of financial crises. Always as Prior he held out and lived the highest ideals of intellectual, spiritual, ministerial and preaching efficiency to his subjects.

"As spiritual father our Jubilarian was distinguished. As pastor in New York and as first chaplain of the Catholic University he was always the good shepherd. Always close to those souls entrusted to him by God, always respecting their freedom, never meddlesome, easy to approach, ever gentlemanly and patient, he won souls to God and made our faith dignified and attractive.

"In his capacity as preacher of the word of God Father Fitzgerald has become nationally famous. His preaching was characterized by solid doctrine, graceful diction, elegance of expression, simplicity of

arrangement and animated enthusiasm for the importance of pulpit work and the salvation of souls.

"As a consultant in official matters of the Order of Preachers as well as in private and personal direction the advice of our Jubilarian has been invaluable. He has been an asset to the many consiliar gatherings, provincial and international which he has attended. He has been blessed with judicious poise, deep sympathy for distress and a pervading concern for the commonweal.

"It is true Father Fitzgerald in his many faceted career has met the standards of the priesthood in a superior way. For this work he was eminently fitted by the nature given to him by his very unusual parents, by his own industry and by a plenitude of God's grace. And we gather not as boastful friends of the Jubilarian but in the common cause of democratic gratitude to God who has given Father Fitzgerald fifty rich years of priestly life and has given us this cause for rejoicing. We are happy to have the presence of his immediate family this morning and to them we extend our felicitations.

"Father Fitzgerald, it is my privilege as one who has been closely associated with you for more than forty years, to convey to you the greetings of your brethren and your other friends. We pray God and our holy Father St. Dominic to give you many more years of inspiring example to all of us. In the pattern of your life may we learn to be gentlemanly without stiffness, democratic and genial with dignity, magnanimous with simplicity, devoted to the Order of Preachers but with Christ's church transendant over all else. May we learn from you to have respect for age and confidence in youth, courage to act and modesty in success, confidence in our ability and devotion to humility. May God bless you with many more years in the priesthood."