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THE SYNODS OF THE DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS

Although the last Synod held in the Diocese of Columbus was designated as the fifth, there were, in fact, five which preceded it. Following the establishment of the diocese in 1868, the first diocesan synod was held August 20, 1869. Others followed on August 27, 1873; May 26, 1885; October 12, 1887, July 16, 1902, and October 8, 1952. The ones held in 1887 and in 1902 are both labelled the fourth synod of the diocese.

A Synod is an assembly of diocesan priests and of religious superiors who, under the bishop, treat only those questions which pertain to the needs of the clergy and the people of the diocese. The bishop is the only lawgiver; all others have a consultative vote. Those who must be called to the synod are the vicar-general, the diocesan consultors, the rector of the seminary, the reverend deans, pastors of the city, at least one pastor from a deanery, and one superior of each clerical religious community in the diocese. Synods should be held every ten years, or oftener if the bishop so determines (1).

Bishop Sylvester H. Rosecrans presided at the diocese's first synod held in 1869. No records are available of this synod except an account which was published in the "Catholic Telegraph" of Cincinnati on Wednesday, September 1, 1869. It is the text of the secretary's report of the synod. A three-day retreat preceded the opening of the synod which was held in St. Joseph's Cathedral.

The secretary's report of the first diocesan synod of Columbus as it appeared in the "Catholic Telegraph":

"The first Synod of the Diocese of Columbus was held on the twentieth day of August, 1869, with all the ceremonies prescribed by the Roman Pontifical. The Retreat for the clergy, preached by the Rt. Rev. Bishop of the diocese, was given on the three days preceding. The Synod was opened by Pontifical High Mass celebrated by the Bishop, with Very Rev. J.B. Hemsteger, Vicar General of the diocese, as assistant priest; Rev. Damian Kluber and Rev. Julius Brent, deacons of honor; Rev. Francis Specht and Rev. Nicholas Pilger, deacon and sub-deacon. The officers of the Synod were Rev. M. J. D. Ryan, secretary, Rev. Michael Ahern, notary, Rev. J. F. Rotchford and Rev. W. T. Bigelow, Chanters. Rev. G. H. Ahrens, chancellor of the diocese, and Rev. Bernard Wisman, were masters of ceremonies.

"The Rt. Rev. Bishop declared as received and binding in the diocese the decrees of the Provincial and Plenary Councils of Baltimore, and the decrees and statutes of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

"He explained to his clergy the sense of the privilege which he had received from Rome for them in regard to the celebration of Masses for the dead.

"He charged his clergy to keep carefully and exactly an account of the financial affairs of their churches.

"The Synod closed with the prescribed ceremonies.

M.J.D.RYAN, Secretary
MICHAEL AHERN, Notary."

The "Provincial Council" of Baltimore, the primatial see of the country, was a meeting of all the bishops of the country when Baltimore was the only archdiocese. The "Plenary Councils" which followed were meetings of the various provinces of the country, since there were then other archdioceses besides Baltimore. The rulings of these various councils as well as the statutes and decrees of the archdiocese of Cincinnati from which the diocese of Columbus was then separated, were declared as binding.

The privilege regarding Masses for the dead as announced by Bishop Rosecrans, referred to the faculty granting priests permission to celebrate Requiem Masses on certain week days.

The Second Synod

The second synod of the diocese of Columbus was held in St. Joseph's Cathedral, beginning August 22, 1873. It was preceded by a three-day retreat conducted by Rev. Prior J. V. Bokel, O.S.D., of St. Joseph's, Somerset.

According to the prescription of the Roman Pontifical (2), the Synod was opened by the celebration of the Mass of the Holy Ghost by Rt. Rev. Bishop Rosecrans, D.D., assisted by the following officers: Assistant Priest, Very Rev. J.B. Hemsteger, V.G.; Deacon, Rev. F. H. Specht; Sub-deacon, Rev. J. Casella; Deacons of Honor, Revs. L. De Cailly and C. Schelhamer; Master of Ceremonies, Rev. G.H. Ahrens. The sermon was given by Rev. Joseph McPhillips.

After Mass, the prayers, litanies and hymns prescribed were chanted, and the following officials of the Synod were announced: Very Rev. J. B. Hemsteger, V.G., promoter; Rev. N. A. Gallagher, secretary; Rev. G. H. Ahrens, chancellor, master of ceremonies; Revs. Jos. Jessing and B. Wisman, chanters, and Rev. D.B.Cull, notary.

Priests present for the synod were: Rev. Fred Albert, Very Rev. J.V. Bokel, O.P., Revs. J. Brent, Jno. Casella, Wm. T. D'Arcy, E.L. Fladung, H. Fisher, C.L. Grimmer, W.T.Hawe, P.M. Heery, J.M. Jacquet, Jos. Jessing, D.J. Kluber, Jos. McPhillips, J. A. Moroney, J.A. Murray, L.P. McKiernan, J.C. Goldschmidt, Jno. Gamber, L. De Cailly, C.A. Doherty, Magnus Eppink, J.B. Eis, Aloysius Nonnen, Wm. O'Reilly, N.A. Pilger, J.J. Rauch, F.H. Specht, C.F. Schelhamer, Serge De Stchouleppnikoff, J.J. Slevin, W.H. Sullivan, A.O. Walker, B. Wisman and Jos. Zoegel.

Priests absent from the synod were: Revs. E. Thienpont, T. Tuomey, J.P. Brogard, D.H. Noon, O.P., B. Hildebrand, F. Mortrier, H. H. Mayrose, Stephen Byrne, O.P., and P. Steyl.

After the profession of faith made by all present, reports were presented by five committees who had been appointed to study questions designated for consideration at the synod. The questions were:

1st. Is it better to impose a tax on the several congregations to furnish the Cathedraticum and to support the seminary, or to continue the system of voluntary contributions now in use?

2nd. Is this the time to establish a Catholic diocesan paper?

3rd. Can clerical conferences be advantageously established in this diocese yet?

4th. Can and ought the sacraments of confession and communion be allowed to Catholic parents who refuse to send their children to Catholic schools?

5th. Should any special excommunication, with reservation to the Ordinary, be proclaimed in the diocese against those Catholics who contract marriage before an heretical minister or civil magistrate?

The committee on the first question reported that it was better to continue the system of voluntary contributions. This was adopted and the Bishop appointed Pentecost Sunday for the seminary collection and the Sunday within the octave of All Saints for the Cathedral collection.

It was not felt advisable to establish a diocesan Catholic paper, and clerical conferences were deemed impractical for the present. (2).

The school question received considerable attention at the synod. It was finally determined, and approved by the Bishop, that Catholic parents must send their children to Catholic schools when such schools are located near by.

Those who contracted marriage before a non-Catholic minister were to be considered excommunicated by the general law of the Church. Confessors could absolve after referral to the Ordinary. It was determined by the synod that confessors could absolve those who contracted marriage before a civil magistrate, again after referral to the Ordinary.

The acts of the synod with further explanation by Bishop Rosecrans and with his approval were published under date of September 12, 1873.

The Third Synod

Under date of April 22, 1885, Bishop John A. Watterson, second Bishop of Columbus, announced the convening of the third diocesan synod. He directed that a special prayer to the Holy Spirit be included in all Masses, and that on Sundays the people be invited to pray after each Mass for the success of the synod. The Bishop also noted that the decrees of the fourth provincial council of Cincinnati and of the third plenary council of Baltimore would be a part of the synod.

The synod convened on Tuesday, May 26, 1885, Pentecost Tuesday. It closed on Thursday, May 28. The "Catholic Columbian" (3) reporting on the synod stated: "The convening in this city at St. Joseph's Cathedral, of the Third Synod of the diocese of Columbus, will be an event in ecclesiastical history of our diocese.

With all the circumstance and ceremony prescribed by the Roman Pontifical, the Synod was opened on Tuesday morning, all the clergy of the diocese with the exception of two or three being present. The procession of Priests and altar boys from the Bishop's residence into the Cathedral was a beautiful sight as about fifty Priests were vested as for Mass, in the red color of the Pentecostal time, and the Bishop arrayed in full Pontificals was immediately preceded by Assistant Priest, Deacons of Honor and Deacon and Sud-deacon of the Mass." The account payed special praise to the singing of Father Jessing's (4) boy choir.

The assistant priest at the Pontifical Mass was Very Rev. A. O. Walker, V.G. Rev. J. G. Goldschmidt and Rev. D.A. Clarke were deacon and subdeacon respectively. Deacons of honor were Revs. M. M. Meara and C. L. Rhode.

Officials of the synod were Rev. F. X. Specht, promoter; Rev. M. M. A. Hartnedy, secretary, and Rev. J. Larkin, notary.

Topics which received the attention of the synod were: The duties and rights of pastors; the relative duties of pastors and assistants; priestly life; preaching;; administration of ecclesiastical goods; financial reports; sacramental registers; Catholic societies; pious confraternities; theological conferences; the Sacrifice of the Mass; the sacrament of Penance; intemperance; matrimony; visiting of the sick; funerals; festivals, and a number of miscellaneous items.

Pastors were reminded that theirs was a very serious obligation of teaching religion to the youth. Assistant pastors were to help in this. Either one or the other was to be in the rectory at all times if possible. The assistant was not to send for matrimonial dispensations from the Chancery. Proper clerical dress was directed, with the Roman collar to be worn in and outside of the rectory. No priest was to grow a beard without written permission of the Bishop.

The pastor was directed to keep an accurate inventory of his own personal goods as distinct from parish property. He also was to keep a register of all debts. Proper registers were to be provided for recording baptisms and marriages. Books were also to be provided for recording confirmations, first Communions and funerals.

Catholic societies were not to be for the purpose of temporal good only; they were to foster reception of the sacraments, pious works and the increase of religion. Confraternities in honor of the Blessed Virgin were urged, as also the confraternity of the Holy Name, and of the Sacred Heart. Societies of St. Vincent de Paul, the Propagation of the Faith, of Temperance, and Purgatory were recommended. Sodalities for young people were to be established.

Conferences for priests were to be held three times annually. Rules for recited, sung and solemn Masses were given. Altar boys were to be properly prepared; Father J. McCallen's Altar Boys' manual was to be used. The synod provided complete instructions for priests in hearing confessions; in arranging for and officiating at marriages, and for funerals.

"Night Picnics" were forbidden, and the selling or use of liquor was prohibited for fairs and festivals.

Among the miscellaneous items listed as passed by the synod and promulgated by the Bishop were: Vespers was to be sung on Sundays and holydays, and followed by Benediction. "Revolving" tabernacles were to be done away with,

and the catechism of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore was to be introduced as soon as possible.

The Fourth Synod

The fourth synod was convened on Wednesday morning, October 12, 1887, in St. Joseph's Cathedral. "The attendance was very full, only five or six being prevented from coming, owing to sickness" (5). Following a colorful procession from the bishop's residence to the Cathedral, the synod opened with a Solemn Pontifical High Mass with Bishop Watterson as celebrant. He was assisted by Very Rev. F.X. Specht, V.G., assistant priest; Rev. J. C. Goldschmidt, deacon of the Mass; Rev. J. McGirk, subdeacon of the Mass; Revs. M. M. Meara and C.L. Rhode, deacons of honor, and Rev. J. P. White, master of ceremonies. The choir was under the direction of Professor John Fahey. A large number of laity attended.

Officials of the synod were Father Specht, promoter; Revs. Francis Campbell and Martin Hartnedy, secretaries; Rev. John B. Eis, notary; Rev. Nicholas Pilger, advocate of the clergy; Rev. James White, master of ceremonies, and Revs. Thomas O'Reilly, B.P. Horny and J.J. Cahalan, chanters.

The bishop's council was determined. Chosen for a three-year term were Father Pilger, Lancaster; Father William F. Hayes, Newark; and Father Clement Rhode, Columbus. Named to the council by the bishop were Father Specht, vicar general; Father F. A. Spencer, O.P., prior of St. Joseph's, Somerset; Father R.J. Fitzgerald, rector of the Cathedral, and Father John B. Eis, chancellor.

Appointments to the financial committee and to the matrimonial tribunal were announced, after which it was decided that the diocese would have four deaneries with Franklin, Delaware, Morrow, Knox, Holmes, Licking, Coshocton and Pickaway counties making up the first one. The bishop was president of this one.

Father Pilger was named deacon of the second one which included Fairfield, Perry, Muskingum, Hocking, Morgan, Athens and Washington counties. In the third deanery were Jefferson, Carroll, Tuscarawas, Harrison, Guernsey, Belmont, Noble and Monroe counties. Father Hartnedy was dean. In the fourth deanery were Scioto, Lawrence, Gallia, Meigs, Vinton, Jackson and parts of Pike and Ross counties. No dean was named.

Six priests were chosen to promote the study of sacred subjects. They were Fathers Eis, William F. Hayes, Francis Campbell, D. J. Kennedy, O.P., Pilger and Hugh Lilly, O.P.

On the school board were all the reverend deans, and also the pastor of St. Patrick's, Columbus; Father William F. Hayes, Newark, and Fathers Michael M. Meara and Clement Rhode, Columbus.

Bishop Watterson then set up a committee to determine how to properly provide for sick priests. Those named were Fathers Specht, Pilger, Daniel Cull, J. T. Bric and E. L. Fladung. The parish collections received on the Sunday following the feast of All Saints was to provide a financial basis for this purpose. This was the beginning of what was known as the "Infirm Priests' Fund."

Other synodal acts had to do with the duties of priests, care of religious, and of the faithful. Before closing it was decided to send a message of devotion

and loyalty to the Holy Father on his jubilee.

Priests who attended the synod were: Very Rev. F. X. Specht, V.G., Revs. Peter Bishop, William F. Boden, Jeremiah T. Bric, J. J. Cady, John J. Cahalen, Francis J. Campbell, Dennis A. Clarke, James H. Cotter, Daniel B. Cull, William R. Dunn, O.P., John B. Eis, Father Felix Mary, O.M. Cap., Revs. Richard J. Fitzgerald, Edward L. Fladung, John C. Goldschmidt, Louis Grimmer, John S. Hannon, Bede Hansen, O.S.F., Martin M.A. Hartnedy and James J. Hartley.

Revs. William F. Hayes, Patrick M. Heery, Gerard Hormisch, B. P. Horny, Father Irenaeus, O.M. Cap., Revs. John M. Jacquet, Joseph J. Jessing, Paul F. Kehoe, John B. Kuehn, Thomas J. Lane, H. J. Leonard, O.P., A. M. Leyden, Hugh T. Lilly, O.P., Father Martin, O.M. Cap., Revs. Samuel S. Mattingly, H. H. Mayrose, J. J. McCann, William McDermott, John E. McGirk, H. J. McManus, O.P., John T. McNally, John Meade, Michael M. Meara, Philip M. Meschenmoser and T. Moitrier.

Revs. George J. Montag, Lawrence G. Mulhane, Louis Nonnen, Dominic H. Noon, O.P., Bernard M. O'Boylan, John B. Oeink, Thomas J. O'Reilly, R. P. O'Rourke, O.P., William H. O'Sullivan, Nicholas Pilger, John Rauck, John Ritter, Clement R. Rhode, Walter Ross, Ignatius Sagerer, Henry Schlichter, Joseph Schmitt, James J. Slevin, J.H. Slinger, O.P., Very Rev. T. A. Spencer, O.P., Revs. Philip Steyle, Peter T. Thurheimer, D. R. Towle, O.P., Joseph Tuohey, Peter J. Weisenberger, John B. Weisinger, Simon Weisinger, James P. White, Bernard Wissmann and Francis M. Woesmann.

The Fifth Synod

The next synod of the diocese was held July 16, 1902. For some reason it was designated the "fourth". And the one held later, October 8, 1952, was labelled the "fifth synod."

Matters for the 1902 synod were sent to the clergy in March of that year. And on June 16 letters were mailed to all priests having care of souls summoning them to the synod to be held July 16.

Accordingly, on that morning all the clergy gathered in the Bishop's residence and went from there in solemn procession to the Cathedral where a solemn Pontifical High Mass at eight o'clock opened the synod. Bishop Henry Moeller was celebrant of the Mass; Rev. M. M. Meara, assistant priest; Revs. B. M. O'Boylan and M.M.A. Hartnedy, deacons of honor; Rev. L. W. Mulhane, deacon; Rev. Joseph Weigand, subdeacon, and Revs. F.W. Howard and C.F. Kessler, masters of ceremonies.

Officials of the synod were Very Rev. F. X. Specht, promoter; Rev. N. E. Pilger, advocate of the clergy; Very Rev. D.J. Kennedy, O.P., and Rev. D. A. Clarke, secretaries; Revs. F.W. Howard and C.F. Kessler, masters of ceremonies, and Rev. A.M. Leyden, director of music.

All present made a profession of Faith, after which the acts of the synod were solemnly promulgated by the Bishop. The revised constitution of the Infirm Priests' Fund was inserted as an appendix to the acts of the synod. Members of the Board for the Infirm Priests' Fund were named and twelve priests were chosen as synodal examiners. Father Specht was again confirmed as vicar general of the diocese. Father Meara was made chancellor and the board of consultors was announced. Rev. D.A. Clarke, Columbus; Rev. N. E. Pilger, Lancaster; Rev. M.M.A. Hartnedy, Steubenville, and Rev. D.A. Nonnen, Portsmouth, were named deans.

A message in behalf of the schools in the Philippine Islands was sent to President Roosevelt. Other business of the synod included the naming of the members of the matrimonial tribunal and of the commission on church properties.

Synodal acts had to do with diocesan schools, Mass stipends, the sacraments, funerals, remedies for blasphemy and intemperance, forbidden societies, confraternities, special devotions, collections, church committees, care of church property, parish boundaries, salaries, church music and some abuses. The salary of pastors was set at eight hundred dollars per year, with furniture, light and heat provided by the church.

The Sixth Synod

The sixth synod, labelled the "fifth", was convened by Bishop Michael J. Ready on October 8, 1952. Officials were: Rev. Msgr. Francis J. Schwendemann, promoter; Rev. Raphael D. Rodgers, advocate of the clergy; Rev. George A. Buchmann, secretary; Rev. George Schorr, notary; Revs. Thomas Gallen and Richard Dodd, chanters, and Rev. Msgr. Roland T. Winel and Rev. James J. Carroll, Masters of ceremonies.

The statutes of the synod had to do with the clergy, the sacraments, sacred places and divine worship, the teaching authority of the Church, and the temporal goods of the Church. Included in the appendices was a summary of chancery directives, chantry regulations, tribunal regulations, church music regulations and diocesan faculties.

A message from Cardinal Tardini, papal secretary of state, was read announcing that the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, bestowed the Apostolic Blessing on the bishops, the clergy and laity of the diocese.

- 1) Canons 358-362 of the Code of Canon Law.
- 2) The first edition of the diocesan paper, "The Catholic Columbian," appeared Jan. 1, 1875.
- 3) May 30, 1885.
- 4) Father Joseph Jessing was director of St. Vincent orphanage.
- 5) "The Catholic Columbian," October 15, 1887.

THE FOUNDING OF THE INFIRM PRIESTS' FUND

During the fourth synod of the diocese of Columbus, held in 1887, it was decided to make arrangements to properly provide for sick priests. A committee was chosen to do the work. A document in the diocesan archives records the first meeting of this committee. It is dated October 11, 1887, which is a mistake in date, since the synod opened on October 12. The text of the minutes of the meeting follows:

"Oct. 11, 1887. In the Synod of the clergy of the Diocese of Columbus, convened this day in the city of Columbus, the Right Rev. Bishop, John A. Watterson, announced to the assembled clergy his intention of providing some efficacious means for the relief of such priests in the diocese who were unable by reason of health or other causes to perform their priestly duties. Following the instructions of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, he set forth the plan which they recommended, and which is substantially contained in the

following leading ideas:

"First: That a fund should be created which should be known as the 'Infirm Priests' Fund of the Diocese of Columbus'.

"Second: That this fund should be under the management of an elective board of the priests of the Diocese, who should make such rules for its distribution and control as should suggest themselves to their judgment, and which should best provide for the ends in view.

"The Rt. Rev. Bishop then stated that he would relinquish all rights in the premises for the occasion and leave the selection of the entire board to the vote of the assembled clergy. The election was then held, and resulted in the selection of the following: Very Revs. F. X. Specht, V.G. and N. E. Pilger, R.D.; Revs. M. M. Meara, C. L. Rhode and W.F. Hayes.

"As the result of an interchange of views and in order to start the fund, it was decided to take up a collection in each church and mission of the Diocese on some Sunday in November following, which would at once put funds into the hands of the Board for any wants that might occur. At the close of the Synod the Board met in a room of the Episcopal residence for the purpose of organizing by the election of such officers as were called for under the provisions of the end for which they were elected.

"The election resulted in the choice of the following officers:

"Vice President, Very. Rev. F. X. Specht, V.G.; treasurer, Rev. M. M. Meara and secretary, Rev. W. L. Hayes.

"After the announcement of the canvas, on motion made and carried, the Board adjourned to meet on Wednesday afternoon, October 26th.

"Approved: Johan A. Watterson, B'p, Pres'd't. W.L. Hayes, Sec."

Minutes of the second meeting held October 26, 1887: "The Board met this afternoon at the residence of the Very Rev. Vice President. All the members were present. The Very Rev. Vice President announced the object of the meeting to be the adoption of rules and regulations for the government of the Board and the Fund under its control. After an expression of views on the part of each member on the subject matter, on motion carried, it was resolved to appoint two members of the Board to draft a series of rules for the purpose, and present them at the next meeting for consideration and adoption. The Vice President was authorized by vote of the Board to make the appointments. He selected Revs. C. L. Rhode and W. L. Hayes for this duty. No other business being before the Board, it adjourned, on motion, to meet on Tuesday afternoon, Nov 13th, at the same time.

"Approved: John A. Watterson, B'p, Pres'd't. W. L. Hayes, Sec."

Note: A revised text of the constitution and rules of the Infirm Priests' Fund was embodied as an appendix to the acts of the diocesan synod held July 16, 1902.

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