

University of Notre Dame
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He Built Altars For God.

The death, early Monday morning of Brother Columbkil, C.S.C., ended 44 productive years in the service of God. Like St. Joseph, who is the patron of the Brothers of Holy Cross, Brother Columbkil was a carpenter. And like St. Joseph, too, he was ever spending his talents--and exceptional talents they were--in the service of God.

As Patrick Fitzgerald, he entered the Community of Holy Cross on August 4, 1890. He was then 34 years of age, and had already in his native New Brunswick and at Prince Edward Island mastered the trade of ship builder. When he entered the Community he was aptly given the name Brother Columbkil, after the famous Irish saint, Saint Columba or Columbkil, whose name means "dove of the churches", and who had been so named because of his intense efforts in Christianizing, and building churches for the Picts in Scotland.

Like his namesake, Brother Columbkil was happiest in spending his talents in the house of God. While still in the Novitiate he showed his zeal for God and his skill as a cabinet maker and carver in making the Novitiate altar.

All the older buildings on the campus at Notre Dame contain altars, the products of his skill and of his intense desire to build the most fitting tabernacles for Christ here at Notre Dame, the "City of the Blessed Sacrament".

His altar work, including a reproduction of the Bernini altar (built for Holy Cross College, Washington D.C.) had to be done in his spare time after shop hours. The lights in his private shop often burned long into the night, but never once was he known to be late for work in the morning.

His ability wasn't restricted to altars and to cabinet work, however. He had the ability to draw plans and blue prints, and to supervise the entire construction of buildings. Moreau Seminary and the present Community Infirmary are his products from plans to the building complete.

Daring and fearless, he always led the way in the more dangerous phases of erecting buildings and of repairing them. Never, however, would he permit any of his carpenters to endanger themselves. For example, you all have gazed up at the towering flag pole. One time the pulley at the top needed repairs, and no one could be found on the campus willing to undertake the job, until Brother Columbkil himself, although advanced in years, fixed up a contraption of ladders and pulleys, and to the alarm and admiration of a great crowd, went up and fixed the pulley.

Hardly sick a day in his life, Brother Columbkil worked to the very end until stricken with coronary thrombosis last December 30, he was forced to go to the Community Infirmary. Although he suffered intense pain, he maintained his temper throughout, and was careful lest he be any inconvenience to his doctor or nurses.

Just before his death, he wrote a note to his Superior. "I am feeling my time is short. I am feeling that this week is as much as I shall see, and I am not hoping for any more. The sooner I get off now, the better I will like it."

His wish Monday morning was granted. Let us be sure that Saint Joseph welcomed him with joy, and presented him with pride and love to Christ, the carpenter's Son. Let us in gratitude keep good Brother Columbkil in our prayers.

PRAYERS: (deceased) Mrs. Anna Tully; friend of Bernard Murray (Morrissey); uncle of Fr. J. P. Lynch C. S. C.; Brother Columbkil C. S. C.; Mother M. Teresita P.V.M., Ill, (operation) Mrs. Garney Banahan; sister of John Francis (Scrin). Six spec. ints.