
"Rabboni!"

It is truly meet and just, right and availing unto salvation that always and every-where we give thanks to Thee, Holy Lord, Almighty Father, everlasting God, through Christ our Lord; in whom was made manifest to us the radiant hope of a blissful resurrection that those who are saddened by the thought of inevitable death, may be comforted by the promise of eternal life to come. For the life of those who believe in Thee, O Lord, is subject indeed to change but not unto destruction; and when the house of our earthly sojourn has crumbled away, an eternal home in Heaven is won. Wherefore with Angels and Archangels, Thrones and Dominations and with all the host of Heavenly Army we sing our hymn to Thy Glory.

--Preface of the Mass for the Dead

Twenty-five years of devotion to Notre Dame students out of twenty-seven in the priesthood ended early Friday morning when Father Francis Butler, after six months of lingering illness, closed his eyes and died. Like Father Scandlon before him, he had known that within the ordinary dispositions of divine providence his sickness would be fatal. Without fear, with exemplary reconciliation, he suffered cheerfully, patiently, waiting for the end. . . "It is appointed unto men once to die."

Nine Holy Cross priests died during the past year. In May, a year ago, it was Father Davis. . . then Father McKeon, Father Ryan, Father Gallagan. . . soon followed in order Father Lennartz, Father Bolger, Father Sauvage and Father Scandlon. . . Now Father Butler. A novena of nine priestly deaths. Like all novenas it represents spiritual works accomplished; for them an aggregate close to 350 years of priestly service. More than one hundred thousands Masses, hundreds of thousands of confessions. God alone knows how many Hours of the Divine Office, how many Communion distributed, how many conversions, how many visits to the sick, how many men, women and children learned to love Christ more because these priests left all things to follow Him.

The Church Triumphant! Father Butler rejoins his mother and father, his relatives, friends and confreres who were called before him. Now he has reached his ultimate development, the final end for which God created him. Faith led him to beatific vision; hope to eternal possession; like a tired child running into the arms of his father, love urged him into the everlasting embrace of God.

Heaven is a place of rest but not of inactivity. The Beatific Vision! Not by means of ideas, not by sense-images, but by direct immediate contact, with nothing whatsoever intervening between him and God, Father Butler sees God. . . face to face.

No words can describe such happiness, this beatific thrill that ravishes the mind and will in eternal ecstasy. When on the Mount of the Transfiguration, Peter, James and John saw Christ for a moment with His face as the sun and His garments white as snow, they were beside themselves in wonderment. Yet this manifestation was but one ray of divine glory, not yet the Beatific Vision.

St. Thomas Aquinas, after contemplating God during the celebration of his Mass, once exclaimed: "Everything I have written seems trash, compared with what I've seen, and what has been revealed to me." All created perfections in the universe--the beauty, intelligence, power, goodness and love--may thrill us. But what of the beatific thrill of infinite Beauty, infinite Intelligence, infinite Power, infinite Goodness, infinite Love! As Monsignor Sheen puts it: "If the sparks thrill us, what must be the thrill of the flame!"

When the glorified Christ revealed Himself to Father Butler, did he cry out: "My Lord and my God?" . . . Or was it an ecstatic outcry like Magdalene's? . . . "Rabboni!"

Prayers: (deceased) mother of Dave Hogan (Dil); wife of Mike Beshko, '30. grandmother of John Lyon (B-P). Operation, Frank Dolon (Far); Ill, mother of Bob Elliot (Dil).