

A Prince of the Church

MONS. GABRIEL M. REYES ELEVATED TO POST OF COADJUTOR ARCHBISHOP OF MANILA WITH RIGHT OF SUCCESSION TO ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL J. O'DOHERTY, NOW AILING AND BEDRIDDEN

By MARIO ROSADIOS
Staff Member

In a magnificent rite, resplendent with the brilliance of a thousand chandelier lights playing on the purple robes of high ecclesiastical dignitaries, with choir music rising to heavenly heights as seminarians broke into the sacred hymn, "Sacerdote at Pontifex," and priests and laymen chanted the "Te Deum," Mons. Gabriel M. Reyes, until recently Archbishop of Cebu, was installed Thursday evening as Coadjutor Archbishop of Manila at the San Miguel pro-Cathedral, with a right of succession to Mons. Michael J. O'Doherty, ailing Archbishop of Manila.

The installation rites were conducted by Mons. Igidio Vagnozzi, Apostolic Delegate and representative of the Pope in the Philippines. The ceremonies began shortly after Mons. Reyes and Mons. Vagnozzi arrived at the San Miguel pro-Cathedral and fireworks exploded into the air and churchbells rang in joyous welcome.

Mons. Reyes took his seat at the throne on the right side of the altar, while Mons. Vagnozzi took the throne on the left side. As the ceremonies began, Rev. Fr. Augusto Ignacio of the Sampaloc church read the papal decree on the Archbishop's appointment which was in Latin, and was translated into English and Tagalog by Rev. Fr. Vicente Reyes of the San Miguel parish.

Then followed the Act of Obedience of the clergymen



Coadjutor Archbishop GABRIEL M. REYES

With his appointment to his high office, Mons. Reyes becomes the highest dignitary in the Church Hierarchy. His elevation was received by both priests and laymen with great rejoicing. To honor him, President Quirino gave him a reception at Malacañan Palace.

belonging to the Manila archdiocese who approached Mons. Reyes at his throne. Mons. Rufino Santos, auxiliary bishop of Manila, delivered a welcome address to which

Mons. Reyes responded.

The new archbishop said that he was taking over his new post in a spirit of humility, declaring that he was aware of the great task that lies ahead. He said that during his incumbency, he will devote himself largely to accelerating the work of the Catholic Action and the establishment of more Catholic schools in the Manila archdiocese.

Mons. Reyes, in the complete vestments of the archbishop, with miter over his purple skull cap and crossier held in his hand, walked to the altar and as a prelude to the benediction, he sang the "Antiphon to St. Michael." He then invoked the Holy Spirit, at the same time chanting, "Veni Creator."

Assisted by Mons. Narciso Gatpayat of the Binondo Church and by Mons. Vicente Fernandez of the Quiapo church, the new archbishop exhibited the holy monstrance as the huge congregation bowed their heads. At the conclusion of the ceremonies, Mons. Reyes blessed the congregation, marking a new milestone in the religious life of the people of the Philippines.

The new prince of the church was the last of the series of bishops of the Cebu bishopric and the first of the Cebu archbishopric. He was consecrated Bishop of Cebu at a splendid rite held at the Jaro (Iloilo) Cathedral on October 11, 1932, and he took

possession of the bishopric on October 13 of the same year.

Then on April 28, 1934, the Diocese of Cebu was created and made an Archbishopric, and Bishop Reyes was made its first Archbishop. He was installed on November 9, 1934.

A native of Kalibo, Capiz, where he was born on March 24, 1892, Archbishop Reyes took his ecclesiastical studies in the Diocesan Seminary of Jaro, Iloilo, and was ordained priest on March 27, 1915. Mons. Reyes has thus served more than a third of a century of his life in the priesthood.

A noted scholar, writer and teacher, Mons. Reyes worked hard during his early years of priesthood. For months after his ordination, he served as assistant to the parish priest of Jaro, then successively he served in as parish priest of Balasan comprising the towns of Estancia, Batad and Carles, then Capiz, Capiz, and finally Sta. Barbara, Iloilo.

In 1920, he was appointed Chancellor of the Jaro Diocese and Vicar General on April 29, 1927. He served in this post for about five years when he was preconized Bishop of Cebu on July 29, 1932.

During the Japanese occupation, Mons. Reyes nearly lost his life when after being put under strict surveillance by the Japanese he was forced by the enemy to collaborate with them. Mons. Reyes demurred.

"My task is to minister to the spiritual needs of the people," Mons. Reyes told a Japanese colonel who had been quite insistent in his demands that he signed a political manifesto for the people of Cebu and the surrounding islands.

At first Archbishop Reyes was able to sidetrack the Jap officer but when the American liberation forces started to bomb that southern city, the sons of Nippon decided to take him as hostage.

Somehow word came to Mons. Reyes of the coming of the Japanese and he left the archbishop's palace in Cebu just a few minutes before the arrival of his would-be captors.

For some time after liberation, no word was heard from Mons. Reyes. It was thought then that he had been killed by the Japs, but Mons. Reyes turned up very much alive ready and determined to rebuild the churches, the schools and colleges, hospitals and seminaries which were destroyed by the war. The conversion of the Colegio de San Carlos of Cebu into a university, the establishment of girls dormitories and the opening of Catholic schools in several towns in the Visayas, not to mention the repair and construction of damaged churches, including that in Kalibo, Capiz, are among the more recent accomplishments of Mons. Reyes.

At 57, he is still hale and hearty. And he is in good health. For him it has been work, work, work, and work he must if he must re-establish the Manila archdiocese into its old pre-war preeminence.

In Manila alone, work in the repair and reconstruction of several destroyed churches await him. The Sta. Cruz church, the Binondo church, and the Manila Cathedral, not to mention other churches in Intramuros razed by the war, are awaiting his leadership, which on several occasions he has demonstrated while Archbishop of Cebu.

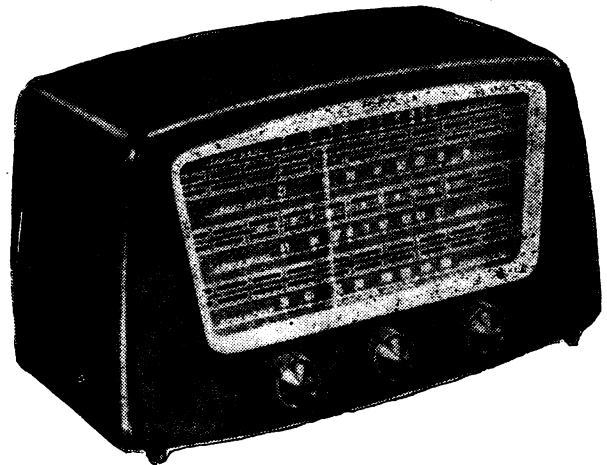
Of course, as a lay Catholic has put it, the work of church reconstruction and repair will cost a lot of money. But Mons. Reyes is not afraid to tackle the job. God willing, he will surmount all difficulties in the present as he has surmounted so much hardships in the past.

Faith—it has made Gabriel M. Reyes a prince of the church. And Faith will build for him more churches and more schools.

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