

"Men of God have always, from time to time, walked among men, and have made their commission felt in the heart and soul of the commonest hearer."

"On May 17, 1948, the venerable patriarch of the Diocese of Buffalo in his sixty-fifth year of the priesthood surrounded by the ones he loved - his successor and the Sisters of Mercy - quietly passed away. Albion was in mourning and on the day of his funeral, business houses, factories and schools closed their doors. The church was filled to capacity with mourners, including all the Protestant ministers of the village. Most Rev. John F. O'Hara, CSL., Bishop of Buffalo, assisted by Most Rev. Joseph Burke, his auxiliary, said the Pontifical Requiem Mass. A great churchman had departed from this life, who had been honored by the Holy Father with the title of Domestic Prelate by his own Bishop and by the Society of the Propagation of the Faith with the title of "Friend of the Missions". Thus ended the greatest chapter in the history of St. Joseph's".

Monsignor Sullivan was born in Hartland, Niagara County, Dec. 13, 1855 where he attended school. Later he went to Niagara University and following his graduation there studied for the priesthood at Niagara University Seminary. He was ordained May 18, 1883. His first charge was to serve as assistant pastor at Ellicotville for eight months. Following this, he served two churches for slightly more than thirteen years, one at Silver Springs and the other at Perry.

Msgr. Sullivan became pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Albion on May 19, 1897. When he arrived the present church structure was just being completed, the cornerstone having been laid on June 29, 1896. Succeeding the Rev. John Biden as pastor, he raised funds to pay off debts incurred by building the new church. It was during Msgr. Sullivan's tenure that the church property was greatly expanded. In 1905 the property next to the church and rectory was purchased and St. Joseph's School and Lyceum was built of Medina Sandstone to match the church. In 1920 land was purchased for St. Joseph's Cemetery on East Avenue where a Medina Sandstone chapel was erected. In 1916 a corner building adjoining the school property was added for a convent and used by the Sisters of Mercy who taught in the school.

When Msgr. Sullivan retired after serving almost forty-nine years as priest of St. Joseph's Church he had not only made great additions but had cleared the parish of debt and had built up a fund of approximately \$80,000.

There is no exact record of the number of Masses he celebrated, but on the basis of one Mass each weekday and two Masses on Sunday for 63 years as an active priest, he would have sung at least 26,271. While at St. Joseph's he performed 660 marriages and 2,017 baptisms.

In 1927 he became a Monsignor. In 1941 his Alma Mater honored him when officials of the University named one of the houses of Varsity Village after him. It marked the first time that such a house was named after an alumnus. The recognition came for his gift of \$7,000 that made the house possible. Prior to this in 1916 Niagara University had awarded him the honorary degree of L.L.D. He was active in Albion Civic affairs and served as a member of the Albion Board of Education for 18 years. In 1946 Msgr. Sullivan was succeeded by Monsignor Felix McCabe. At that time he was the oldest active priest in Western New York and one of the oldest in the United States.

"He beheld the miraculous transition of the horse and buggy days to the glamorous period of atomic power with its multitude of modern inventions". In 1948 he was laid to rest in his mausoleum at St. Joseph's Cemetery.

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian

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