

"RECOLLECTIONS OF FORTY YEARS"

1927 - 1967

by

Mrs. M. F. Roche

When these "Recollections" were written, there was no special purpose or plan, only a need to preserve some of the memories of the early years in the Diocese of Amarillo. No organization has worked more zealously or contributed more to Christian living than the Council of Catholic Women. It is fitting that these memories be dedicated to the women of the DCCW.

The Council was organized in 1936 and was met with enthusiasm from the start. Two wonderful priests have directed the Council- Father Thomas J. Drury (later bishop) and Msgr. Francis Smyer. It was my privilege to serve as the second president (1939-1941). For several years, I worked very closely with the affiliated organizations.

Catholic women have always been in the forefront in upholding Christian values. Their aim at all times has been to promote moral and spiritual welfare in home and community life. They are loyal to the Church and its teachings. This speaks for the local DCCW members and for Catholic women everywhere. There have been hardships and often sacrifices have had to be made but all agree that their lives have been deepened and enriched. Their faith and enthusiasm in this diocese has been almost unbelievable.

It was interesting and inspiring to see a new diocese take life and grow, but we are still needed. May you continue to help and encourage those who are now serving and who will lead in the future. We must continue to walk together to serve God and His Church.

May God bless you all,

Mrs. M. F. Roche

Hattie R. Roche

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RECOLLECTIONS OF FORTY YEARS

OF THE

DIOCESE OF AMARILLO

1927 - 1967

"THIS IS THE CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED HEART OF THE DIOCESE OF AMARILLO ..."

THE WORDS HAD A NEW AND UNFAMILIAR SOUND. THIS CHURCH IS NOW RAISED TO THE DIGNITY OF A CATHEDRAL. THE LATE FATHER DUNN, IN HIS SELF-SACRIFICING EFFORTS, HAD MADE DREAM A REALITY IN THE BUILDING OF THIS STRUCTURE ... BUT FAR FROM HIS DREAM WAS THE THOUGHT THAT HE WAS BUILDING A CATHEDRAL. THE DIOCESE OF AMARILLO HAD BEEN BORN. ROME HAD SPOKEN. THE PAPAL BULL BEGAN: "SINCE, BY GOD'S COUNSEL ..." THE NEW DIOCESE WAS ERECTED. THE FIRST BISHOP WAS BEING INSTALLED, AND THIS WAS TO BE THE SEAT OF HIS AUTHORITY.

RECOLLECTIONS OF FORTY YEARS

THE FIRST BISHOP OF AMARILLO

My husband and I walked up the broad steps of Sacred Heart Cathedral, entered the door, and were directed to seats. This was a day in April, 1927. It was a very special day. Bishop Rudolph A. Gerken was being installed as the first bishop of the new diocese of Amarillo. This moment was a time for reflection.

Father Gerken had been my husband's pastor in earlier years in Ranger and Breckenridge, in the Diocese of Dallas. His zeal, his love of God, his compassion for his fellowman, his love of country, brought respect and recognition not only from his parishioners, but people of all faiths. It was not surprising that he would be called 'from among the multitude' and given the command as was given Peter nearly 2,000 years ago: "Feed My lambs; feed My sheep".

The qualities Bishop Gerken displayed as a priest would grow as he labored in his new vineyard. His constant purpose had been to serve God through His church. To this end he gave all of his strength and ability. His episcopal motto was a reflection of this purpose: "Not I, but Thee, O Lord".

There was a stir in the rear of the church, and the procession of the clergy came down the center aisle. Bishop Lynch of Dallas, who was the installing bishop, led the procession. The new bishop and his attendants moved into the sanctuary.

The clergy of the new diocese were ushered into the front pews. There were perhaps eighteen or twenty in all. I remember Father Dolje, Fathers Tom and Bart O'Brien, Father Clinton, Father Dvorak, Father Boeding, Father Gutierrez, Father Pokluda, Father Krukkert. These were men from the 'four corners', zealous for souls and ready to make the necessary sacrifices to gain them. There was not a rank among them. Also represented and having a place of honor were the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word who were well established in Amarillo. Their two institutions, St. Mary's Academy for Girls and St. Anthony's Hospital, were landmarks of Catholicism there. Other sisters were also represented. Among them were the Sisters of Mercy who were conducting schools in the southern part of the diocese.

The services were long but were finally over. The new bishop went out in procession through the church as he had come in. This time he was bestowing his blessing upon all as if he had been born for this day.

Time does not stand still. But least in our thoughts that day was that it would bring us forty years along with the development of the diocese. It has been with sincere interest and joy, and a sense of pride, that my husband and I have watched the forward march of the church militant in this area.

Never in this century has a bishop faced a greater challenge, with so little outside of his own talent, with which to meet that challenge. The "age" itself was part of the answer to his success.

It is difficult for Catholics today to visualize the condition of the church here forty years ago. It is true, many parishes are today struggling to build schools, or to pay off indebtedness, but we do see the church firmly established around us. There are many beautiful churches, rectories, convents, schools, hospitals, the bishop's house, the Chancery, Alamo Catholic High School, and St. Lucian's Seminary, the Home for the Aged, and the Catholic Children's Home. Few of these existed when Bishop Gerken began his episcopate here.

The new diocese of Amarillo covered over 73,000 square miles, with few paved roads over which to travel in serving it. Statistics¹ show that there were thirty-seven parishes and missions in all, some of them well established. There were seven parochial schools and two private Catholic academies and two Catholic hospitals. The Catholic population was a little less than 20,000 and was served by twenty two priests. This was indeed mission territory.

The time of the erection of the See was providential, however. This section of Texas was experiencing economic growth. Oil and gas had been recently discovered in a number of counties near Amarillo. This development and the resulting industries brought an influx of people and wealth.

¹ All statistics from The West Texas Register.

Bishop Gerken, having no other alternative, took up his residence in the cathedral rectory and also used it as the chancery. As quickly as possible he began to build and expand the badly needed church facilities. Before the first year had ended, there had been built and dedicated four churches and four had been repaired or modernized. In addition, a school for Latin American children had been built in Amarillo.

The bishop visited seminaries in other dioceses and literally begged for priests. He wrote various orders of nuns, but there were no sisters to be spared, or orders were fearful of the venture. He advertised for lay workers who would be willing to give a few years of service to Mexican Americans here who were so neglected. He met disappointment and discouragement many times, but there were a few who responded. The Missionary Catechists of Our Lady of Victory opened a center in Lubbock and later extended their work to other parishes. A few zealous lay women came and organized themselves and were known as Mercy Workers. Their activities centered in Big Spring. The activities of both these groups consisted mainly of social work and catechetical instruction. The Mercy Workers finally disbanded and left the diocese. I met a number of the Mercy Workers and the catechists in the early years and know firsthand of the tremendous amount of good they did. The bishop appealed to the Catholic Extension Society and from this organization he got his greatest financial help in 'building up the House of God'. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Extension Society in 1955, Msgr. Bottoms wrote: "It is no exaggeration but a simple statement of fact to state that without the assistance of the Extension Society, the Catholic Church in Texas would never have achieved its present status, at least not for years to come." (Register, Aug. 12, 1955)

One other source of help, and indeed an angel in disguise, was Mrs. Katherine E. Price of Connecticut. Through the Extension Society, Mrs. Price contacted Bishop Gerken by letter saying she wished to make a donation in the memory of her deceased husband who had successful business interests in the state.

I have heard Bishop Gerken tell of his meeting with Mrs. Price. From first correspondence, he was of the opinion that she wished to make a donation of vestments or perhaps an altar. But she was persistent and finally stated that she wished to make a donation toward Catholic education in Texas. On receiving this information, he lost no time in arranging a meeting with her which took place in the Extension Offices in Chicago.

Having been concerned with the fact that there was no provision for Catholic high school education for boys in the entire territory, Bishop Gerken had already started such a school. It had been opened in the fall of 1928 and had operated for three months in the basement of the cathedral. In January a building had been completed on a tract of land in the northeast section of the city. This school was known at that time as St. George's College. After consultation with Mrs. Price who gave a substantial donation, the name was changed to Price College in memory of her husband.

The Catholics of this area should remember with love and appreciation the name of Countess Price. It was she who came to the rescue a number of times. She built a new wing to the school, the school gym, the bishop's home, St. Lucian's Chapel, aided with other church buildings, gave vestments and sacred vessels, and aided in various other ways.

The Franciscan Missionary Sisters from Colombia, South America heard the plea of the new bishop for help in his mission diocese. After some correspondence they were accepted and arrived in Amarillo in 1933. A convent was built for them on Price College land. Their first duty was to assist the struggling boarding school. Later they expanded as more and more young girls entered the order. They now conduct a number of parochial schools along with their own high school and junior college which they maintain for aspirants to the Franciscan Order.

Within the first six years after the establishment of the diocese, a number of young priests came from other dioceses or were ordained for the Amarillo diocese. I remember well Fathers Steinlage, Bosen, Wonderly, Zienta, Schindler, Morsch, Daly, Kaminsky, Kramer and others. It was Father Joseph Wonderly who gave me instructions in the Catholic faith. I remember well Father Wilfred Bosen's first sermon given at St. Theresa's Church in Panhandle. One thing he stressed that day has remained with me through the years, and that is the obligation in charity to pray for young priests. We knew and loved Father Harry Zienta and watched sorrowfully as he fought his losing battle for life with tuberculosis. All these priests with few exceptions have remained in the diocese, enduring the hardships, building parish life, contributing in this way very much to the development of the diocese.

The first bishop laid the groundwork well. He was not only a builder, an administrator, but he was a deeply spiritual, compassionate man. It was the kindness and understanding of this man of God which helped break down old religious prejudices and brought me to the door of the church. I was confirmed by him in Sacred Heart Cathedral in April, 1929.

Bishop Gerken was made Archbishop of the Metropolitan See of Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1933. During the time he administered the Amarillo diocese, the number of churches increased to fifty eight, schools to fourteen and hospitals to four. The number of priests was now thirty-seven.

CALIFORNIA GIVES UP A 'NATIVE SON'

Although the diocese was still in its infancy, Catholics here had begun to feel a sense of pride in the already visible accomplishments. All shared happiness and joy in the elevation of their first bishop who had now been chosen for wider fields of service. And now there was pleasant anticipation as the installation of the second bishop of the See of Amarillo, Robert E. Lucey, was being awaited

Along with other representatives of distant parishes, my husband and I were ushered once more to seats in Sacred Heart Cathedral. This time the pews filled rapidly. Ahead, near the front, were

a number of nuns representing various communities that were now working in the diocese. A hushed air of expectancy, of interest, held the audience.

Archbishop Drossaerts of San Antonio who was to install the new bishop led the procession of the clergy into the church and down the center aisle. He was accompanied by several bishops. The priests of the diocese, including the fourteen additional ones who had come to Amarillo since the erection of the diocese, followed. It was a distinctive group.

As the services progressed, the well-trained choir added a triumphant note to the ceremony being enacted. It was an atmosphere of progress, solemnity, and splendor as Bishop Lucey was installed shepherd of the faithful in the Amarillo diocese. This was in May, 1934.

Father Robert E. Lucey was pastor of St. Anthony's parish, Long Beach, California when he was appointed bishop. He was consecrated in the Cathedral in Los Angeles May 1, 1934. He arrived in Amarillo May 15 bringing with him his frail Irish mother and his gracious sister, May. These two remained a part of his household until each departed this earthly life.

Bishop Lucey chose for his motto: "The Lord is our King". If it could be said of Bishop Gerken that he was a 'builder of churches' then it may be said of Bishop Lucey that he 'launched us into Catholic action'.

Catholic action can be defined in a number of ways. The definition most used at that time was 'the participation of the laity in the program of the hierarchy through prayer, study, and action'. Such expressions as 'pray the Mass' 'the Mystical Body', 'social action', 'putting the mind of the church into the mind of the world' were heard at every meeting of the laity.

His Excellency began plans at once for organizing the laity and for instituting means through which they would become better informed. In fact, Bishop Lucey laid the groundwork thirty years ago in this diocese for 'aggiornamento', or Christian renewal, now being stressed as a result of Vatican II.

In 1936, the diocese was given its first official Catholic weekly newspaper, *The Texas Panhandle Register*. The first issue was dated July 6, 1936. *The Register* continues to serve as the means of diocesan communication although the name has been changed to *The West Texas Register*. It would be difficult to determine the helpful influence this weekly diocesan paper had on the growing parishes.

A very significant event took place in 1938. Bishop Lucey had persuaded the Christian Brothers from the Province of St. Louis to take over the administration of Price College, and they arrived for the fall term. Until this time, the priests of the diocese had assumed teaching duties. The school at this time was ten years old.

In the fall of 1937, the Amarillo Diocesan Council of Catholic Women was officially organized and became affiliated with the National Council. Although a number of priests were reluctant to

accept changes and some of the women were wedded to altar societies, the Council had tremendous growth. At a diocesan convention just three years after it was formed, Bishop Lucey congratulated the women on their progress and said they were as well organized as most were after ten years of growth.

The year following the organizing of the Council, His Excellency set up a committee on study clubs. (Later when the committee system of the National Council was more clearly understood, this committee was known as Religious Discussion Clubs and functioned under the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.) The people were hungry for more knowledge of their faith and the program was successful from the beginning. It was my privilege to serve as the first diocesan chairman of this committee, and at one time there were 1,500 adults enrolled in study with one or more groups in most parishes. One of the most pleasing reports was from a family who lived on an oil lease near Stinnett. The father and mother and two teenage children formed a family group and followed the suggested course of study.

Bishop Lucey made it possible at this time for retreats to be conducted for the laity. The first one for women was held in Amarillo in 1937. If I remember correctly, there were about forty women in attendance.

Before Bishop Lucey left the diocese, he had organized the men into Holy Name Societies. This was in 1940. An organization was set up in every parish though some were never fully organized and did not function long.

The youth of the diocese were organized and called the Catholic Youth Organization or CYO. The CYO was on a parish, district and diocesan level. The CYO was a very active group and accomplished a great deal before World War II curtailed its activities.

One of the milestones by which the progress of a diocese is marked is its ordination of native sons to the priesthood. On May 12, 1940, Bishop Lucey ordained Father Fred Hyland of Holy Family Parish, Nazareth who was the first 'native' priest. I remembered Father Hyland's ordination, but was to recall it with a deeper appreciation some years later when his mother was named "Catholic Mother of the Year" by the Amarillo DCCW. As chairman of the Public Relations Committee that year, it was my duty to write the story of Mrs. Hyland. Her life was inspirational. Christian motherhood and Christian family living were truly exemplified by this mother and her family. It is not surprising that a son would feel a call to serve God and the church in this dedicated way.

During these years the material development of the church also received attention. They were bad years economically. This section of the state was plagued with drought and dust storms. In spite of this, nine new churches and several parochial schools were built. Catholic education was dear to the heart of Bishop Lucey, and he encouraged the building of schools to meet this need.

The first church in the diocese was built for black people. It was called Blessed Martin de Porres Mission and was located in Amarillo. At the first Mass, only one black was present. A priest of the Dominican Order was in charge and the Dominican Sisters opened a Welfare Center and a school. Both the center and the school are still in operation. The Dominican Sisters have done tremendous work among the black population and have helped overcome prejudice that existed between the races in Amarillo.

During the episcopate of Bishop Lucey, the number of priests in the diocese increased from thirty-seven to fifty-three. Two had been recognized for their contributions to the growing diocese and had been made Domestic Prelates with the title of Rt. Rev. Monsignor. These two were Father John Steinlage and Father F. J. Pohluda.

At this time, 1941, the metropolitan See of San Antonio was vacant due to the death of Archbishop Drossaerts. Bishop Lucey was chosen to head that province. Again Catholics in the Amarillo diocese shared a proud moment - another leader had been advanced to a position of greater responsibility. A gala banquet was held to bid him Godspeed. Although we rejoiced knowing that we would still be under his jurisdiction as part of the Province of San Antonio, we said goodbye with regret.

Msgr. F. J. Pohluda had served the diocese as administrator from June 2, 1933 to May 15, 1934, during the interim after Bishop Gerken left the diocese until the arrival of Bishop Lucey. He was again named to this office and served from January 22, 1941 to November 5 of that year.

A NATIVE TEXAN TO THE EPISCOPAL THRONE

"Nine of Hierarchy to Attend Installation. Archbishop Lucey will Enthroned Successor in Amarillo Amidst Distinguished Gathering. Msgr. Pohluda to Read Papal Bull at Services Beginning At 9:30 a.m." So read the headlines when the third bishop of Amarillo was installed.

At this installation all available space was taken. To control the size of the crowd and accommodate all parishes, a stated number had been assigned to represent each parish in the diocese. Besides former Bishop Lucey, now Archbishop of San Antonio, the first bishop, Most Rev. R. A. Gerken, now Archbishop of Santa Fe, was also present for the ceremonies.

The diocese had come of age. There were now fifty-three priests caring for the 23,075 Catholics here. It was in this setting that Bishop L. J. FitzSimon was installed to head the diocese November 5, 1941. "May the Prince of Peace Reign" was the motto the new bishop chose, and he earnestly sought to bring this about in the hearts and minds of those under his direction.

Lawrence J. FitzSimon was born in San Antonio. He was educated for the priesthood there and in Rome. He was currently serving in the archdiocese when he was appointed bishop of Amarillo. He had been consecrated bishop in old historical San Fernando Cathedral there on October 22 just prior to his installation.

The West Texas Register best describes the new bishop: "His background of scholarship, of active civic consciousness, of true concern for spiritual advancement for his people fitted him for the position to which he was called". It might be added that he was a true patriot, proud of his native state and proud of its history which is rich in brave deeds of men who loved liberty.

Just a little more than thirty days after he arrived in Amarillo came the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent mobilization of our nation for war. As a young man, Bishop FitzSimon had served in the U.S. Navy in World War I. He knew firsthand what war meant. Shortly, fifteen military bases were established in this diocese. He urged the laity to work in the U.S.C., the Red Cross, or in any way to help the young servicemen who were away from home.

One of the most worthwhile projects undertaken was arranging for retreats for servicemen. In this endeavor, the bishop asked the help of the Amarillo DCCW. Retreats were financed with the help of the women's parish organizations and held at all fifteen military bases.

Proof of the bishop's interest in the spiritual welfare of the servicemen is a paragraph in the book, *War Is My Parish* by Dorothy Fremont Grant. In this book, one of the Catholic chaplains stationed at the Amarillo Air Force Base, had this to say: "In the early part of July we began our campaign for the establishment of the Holy Name Society in the field. We called a meeting of the Catholic commissioned and non-commissioned officers and laid our plans. We enlisted the aid of Bishop FitzSimon. On August 29 the campaign culminated in our first Holy Name communion Sunday. Bishop FitzSimon offered the Mass. We enrolled 1,250 men that day to whom we distributed communion. Since then we have enrolled another 500..."

After hostilities ceased, the diocese experienced an unprecedented building and expanding period. The Chancery office was erected as was the Bernard Gordon Memorial Home for Children at Panhandle. A number of schools and churches were built. It is noticeable that the buildings from this period on were more solidly constructed, having an appearance of permanency. Parish units or 'plants' appeared. As directed by His Excellency, ample surface area was to first be obtained by parish committees, giving room for expansion. This was imperative. There was to be built a church, rectory, school and convent – all alike in material and design.

In 1950, St. Mary's Church in Clarendon, which is the oldest church building in the diocese, was completely renovated. It is now most appropriately called St. Mary's Church, Shrine of Our Lady of the Panhandle.

It was in 1954 that the school sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis arrived to take over the administration of the Bernard Gordon Memorial Home, which is now called the Catholic Children's Home. Many in the diocese will recall the humble beginning of this home. They will remember the small white frame house with its narrow stairs leading to the attic-like bedrooms. Mrs. Rose Gordon had generously donated the house and ten acres of land in memory of her son who was a casualty of World War II. The work of charity begun by Mrs. Gordon has been carried forward by many hands. But nothing could have been accomplished here without the

work and sacrifice of the sisters. Today their American motherhouse is located on the land donated by Mrs. Gordon, and they care for both the Children's Home and St. Ann's Home for the Aged nearby. They also conduct a number of parochial schools.

In all, fifty buildings were erected during the time Bishop FitzSimon administered the diocese. The roots of Catholicism were now deep in the wide open plains of Texas.

Much of the material and spiritual progress of the church is due to the work and devotion of the priests who serve it. It was in 1954 that some of the priests were honored for their efforts in some phase of diocesan growth. Rt. Rev. Msgr. Pokluda and Rt. Rev. Msgr. Steinlage, who were the first Domestic Prelates of the diocese, were made Protonaries Apostolic; Fathers Tom and Bart O'Brien and Father Wilfred Bosen were appointed Domestic Prelates; Father A. M. Bottoms and Father L. T. Matthiesen were made Papal Chamberlains, which entitled them to be addressed as Very Reverend Monsignor.

Bishop FitzSimon continued his strenuous episcopal duties -visiting, planning, building - until he suffered a stroke for which he was hospitalized for many months. He recovered sufficiently to attend to some of his duties, but not to assume a full schedule. He was given an auxiliary in 1956.

Bishop FitzSimon was considered an authority on the history of Texas. He was a member of the State Historical Society and the Catholic Historical Society. He did a great deal of research himself into early books and documents of the state and made vital contributions to its history in this way. He was the author of a book on the history of Seguin and Guadalupe Counties.

The third bishop of Amarillo served the diocese for almost seventeen years. His work came to an end July 4, 1958. He departed this life truly 'a beloved bishop' by all who knew him.

Msgr. John R. Morkovsky was one of the most active priests in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Like Bishop FitzSimon, he was a native Texan, and he was also serving in his home archdiocese when he was named auxiliary bishop for the Amarillo Diocese. He was consecrated bishop December 22, 1955, in San Fernando Cathedral by Archbishop Amleto G. Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States.

It might have been unintentional but it was good that he was sent to work with his former fellow priest and to share the burden of the diocese. He was installed Auxiliary Bishop of Amarillo in Sacred Heart Cathedral February 22, 1956.

It had been my humble, ardent wish to be present at the installation of the auxiliary (and fourth) bishop of the diocese since it had been my privilege to attend the first three, but the Panhandle weather interfered. We who lived some distance away had to content ourselves with viewing the ceremony on television. Incidentally, this was the first time a religious ceremony of this kind had been telecast in full from an Amarillo station.

The new bishop took for his motto: "Peace To Those Who Love The Law•.

Bishop Morkovsky was known for his zeal and hard work as a priest. In coming into the diocese as its auxiliary bishop, he brought with him this same spirit and soon his untiring efforts began to bring results. He served as auxiliary bishop for two years, and on the death of Bishop FitzSimon, he was made bishop of the diocese.

His Excellency had served as superintendent of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. This experience made him more keenly aware of the need of Catholic education, and he placed emphasis first on parochial schools. He encouraged the building of schools with an attached gymnasium taking precedence over a church if a choice had to be made. (The gym served as a church until financial problems were overcome.) A great forward step was taken when he appointed a superintendent of Catholic schools in 1963.

Throughout this vast area of Texas there were many thousands of people from Mexico. The heritage they hold most dear is their Catholic faith. This had been kept alive by zealous, hardworking mission priests. But many of these people were poorly instructed in their faith, if indeed, they had any instruction at all.

The hierarchy of the southwest, realizing the urgent need of some program to help these people and to hold them to their faith, had in recent years created the Committee for the Spanish Speaking. Bishop Morkovsky, as had the two preceding bishops, supported this program and urged the laity to work to improve educational and economic conditions. To strengthen religious and family life for these Catholics, he promoted the Cursillo Movement, "Little Courses in Christianity•. He appointed a director for this purpose and many cursillos were held.

In 1960, priests of the church who had served in some special manner were honored. Father Francis Smyer and Father Richard Vaughan were made Papal Chamberlains; Father Andrew Marthaler, Father Peter Morsch, Father Charles Dvorak, and Father Thomas Drury were made Domestic Prelates.

At this time, there was no Minor Seminary in the diocese, or even near. Young boys wishing to start their study for the priesthood early were compelled to go far from home. Bishop Morkovsky proposed to do something about this situation. In September, 1962, he opened St. Lucian's Preparatory Seminary at Price Catholic High School, using some of the buildings for this purpose.

Another project dear to the bishop's heart was realized when St. Ann's Home for the Aged at Panhandle was completed. The home was dedicated in January, 1963. This was a dream fulfilled, not only for Bishop Morkovsky, but for many in the diocese. The capacity of the home was filled almost immediately, and it has answered a great need of the elderly people in this area.

During the episcopate of Bishop Morkovsky, the diocese continued to grow rapidly. Besides the institutions mentioned, new schools and churches were constructed.

In February, 1961, the bishop's responsibilities were lessened somewhat when the diocese was divided and almost half of it went into the newly created diocese of San Angelo. He welcomed the change, commenting that the work of the church would now be done 'more adequately and comprehensively'.

As priests who distinguish themselves in a special way are honored from time to time, so are laymen. The first Knights of St. Gregory of the diocese were invested by Bishop Morkovsky June 6, 1963. They were P. L. Bottoms, A. E. Herrman, J. F. Gulde, F. F. Weil, and J. J. Berg. At the same investiture service, eight of the laity received the papal medal, "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice". These were John Detten, Edward Dzuik, M. G. Underwood, E. J. Urbanousky, Mrs. Rose Gordon, Mrs. J. J. Berg, Miss Elmiere Tesson and Miss Marguerite Robrecht.

Bishop Morkovsky was named coadjutor-bishop of the diocese of Houston-Galveston in 1963 to assist Bishop Nold, who was in failing health. His farewell message was: "I am leaving the diocese of Amarillo with regrets. I have learned to love this area of Texas and can only say that I am happy to be able to continue working for God and the church in this great state. There will be ten times as much work to do, but as this is the will of God for me, I approach my new task with prayerful humility. I go to my new post to help Bishop Nold in his tremendous work".

FROM PENNSYLVANIA TO TEXAS

The fifth bishop of the Amarillo diocese was Lawrence DeFalco. He became the spiritual leader of nearly 80,000 Catholics.

Lawrence DeFalco was born in McKeesport, Pennsylvania August 25, 1915. In the fall of 1933, after finishing high school there, he entered the Minor Seminary at Latrobe, Pennsylvania. After two years, he enrolled at St. John's Home Mission Seminary, Little Rock, Arkansas. There he received the remainder of his seminary training and was ordained a priest for the Dallas Diocese in 1942.

Father DeFalco's first assignment was as an assistant in St. Patrick's Church in Fort Worth. In fact, his priestly career was spent in Fort Worth and Dallas parishes with the exception of two years in Rome where he studied canon law.

In 1961, Father DeFalco was made a Papal Chamberlain. He was pastor of St. Patrick's Co-Cathedral in Fort Worth when he was named bishop of the Amarillo diocese. Here he was consecrated May 30, 1963 by Bishop Gorman. He was installed Bishop of the Amarillo diocese June 13 by Archbishop Lucey of San Antonio. The motto of Bishop DeFalco is taken from the first three words of Psalms 118-133: "Direct my steps according to Thy Word; and let no iniquity have dominion over me".

Bishop DeFalco governs the people of God under his jurisdiction in challenging times. His problems are very different from those of the first bishop of Amarillo. Changes are taking place within the Church. It is a time of spiritual renewal, of rebirth. The Church is ever old, yet ever new. Changes bring uncertainty and unrest. Bishops, as successors to the apostles, have governed and directed the faithful with wisdom and courage for nearly 2,000 years. With this same wisdom and courage, the fifth bishop of Amarillo will meet the challenge of this age.

"As is the natural course of events, as day succeeds day, man's vigor is preserved and his activity and work carried forward. So bishop succeeds bishop, the strength of the Christian family stays vigorous, and the souls and minds of men are ennobled with divine grace..."(From the Papal Bull appointing Msgr. DeFalco bishop.)

THE BUILDER OF CHURCHES

In devoting a few paragraphs of reminiscences of the early days of the church in this area to three priests, it is not intended to detract from the efforts and accomplishments of others. Had such opportunities been presented, any pioneer priest would have met the need. Three categories present themselves: the priest-builder, the priest-moderator, and the priest-pastor. Father John H. Krukkert typifies the priest-builder.

The early pioneer priest, Father Dunn, who is given credit for establishing fourteen churches in this part of Texas before the erection of the diocese, had his counterpart in Father Krukkert. Father Krukkert worked untiringly with Bishop Gerken "to build up the House of God". He may not have had a direct order as did Francis of Assisi, but he devoted all of his energy as though he did.

Father was born in Enschede, Holland, in 1890. He was educated for the priesthood in Switzerland and was ordained there in 1920 for the diocese of Dallas in the United States. The year following his ordination, he arrived in Dallas and was assigned as an assistant in a parish there.

When Father Krukkert arrived in this country, he had no knowledge of the English language. One of the first tasks he necessarily set for himself was learning it. He soon had a speaking knowledge but never completely mastered it. In 1923 Father Krukkert was sent as pastor to the parish of St. Francis at that time in the Dallas diocese.

The scripture quotation, "The harvest indeed is great but the laborers are few", (Matt. 9:37) seemed to fit Father Krukkert's life. He could see beyond the needs of the parish of St. Francis to many 'ripening fields'. Many times he followed the muddy or dusty unpaved highway along the Santa Fe railway to Panhandle with no church, to White Deer where there was an established parish but no priest, to Pampa where an effort was just being made to organize a parish. He then followed the tracks of the oilfield traffic across the sand hills to the boom town of Borger where a few Catholics were without Mass. Father continued for a number of months in 1926-27 looking

after these five congregations. He arranged his schedule so that he offered the holy sacrifice of the Mass once or twice each month in each of these missions. Later Sacred Heart Parish of White Deer was given a resident pastor and Holy Souls in Pampa became its mission. Father Krukkert continued to serve Panhandle and Borger as missions until the fall of 1927.

As Father made these trips to the various missions, he was busy every minute baptizing, validating civil marriages, giving instructions, hearing confessions. I often wondered how he accepted the contrast of the well-established church in his native Holland with what he found in the oil boom towns. It was in Borger in 1926 that we first knew and loved this devoted, energetic man. We remained personal friends until his death.

During this time, Father built a new church at St. Francis. This was the first church built after the establishment of the diocese. Shortly after the completion of the church there, he built Saint Theresa's in Panhandle. The famous little "tar paper" church in Borger had been built by him in late 1926 and before he was transferred, he had plans underway for St. John's frame building. During his pastorate at St. Francis, while Pampa was still its mission, he bought two lots for a church there and personally financed them, although he was later reimbursed. He also built the rectory in White Deer when the parish was given a resident pastor.

Plainview was developing rapidly at this time, and the number of Catholics was increasing. The small, frame church was no longer large enough for the growing congregation. Father Krukkert was sent to Plainview in October, 1927 with instructions to begin plans for a new church. The project developed rapidly, and by early summer of 1928, a brick church was completed. It was our privilege to be present for the dedication. Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Kennedy and their young son, Dick, my husband, and myself drove from Borger for the services. Msgr. William O'Brien, who was president of the Catholic Extension Society at that time was the guest of honor and gave the dedicatory sermon. The church was named St. Alice at his request in memory of his mother.

While working in and out of Plainview, Father Krukkert enlarged the church and built a rectory at Littlefield. He organized the parish of St. Mary at Jayton and built a small church. He built St. Joseph rectory and a home for the catechists in Lubbock to aid the Mexican-American Catholics there.

Then, working out of Jayton, he built Sacred Heart Church at Aspermont and St. Joseph Church and rectory in Rotan. In starting plans for a church to be known as St. Margaret Mary at Lamesa, he met face to face religious bigotry when an attempt was made to stop the construction of the building. After some delay this was overcome and the church completed.

In 1930 Father was transferred to San Angelo to be pastor of Sacred Heart Church there. He soon realized, however, that the most urgent need was with the Mexican-American population. The people had no church of their own and many were being lost to the faith.

Bishop Gerken directed Father to start a church, to have classes in Christian doctrine and in every way try to revitalize the faith among them. Before the first year was little more than half over, St. Mary's Church had been built for them and almost at once a thriving parish was realized.

Working in and out of San Angelo, this untiring priest completed a rectory for St. Ann's Church in Sonora. He built Sacred Heart Church in McCamey, St. Peter's at Mertzon, and St. Thomas at Rankin.

No one could continue indefinitely at the pace Father set for himself. Until this time, the need, the urgency had served as an impetus, but finally his health failed. He took leave from the diocese in 1935 and spent the next few years in California. In 1942, Father Krukkert returned to the diocese. On the death of Father Dolje, in 1944, he was made pastor of St. Mary's parish in Umbarger.

While serving in Umbarger during World War II, he was able to secure the services of some Italian artisans to redecorate the interior of the church. These men were being held as prisoners of war at a camp nearby. There were woodcarvers and painters who gladly gave their talents. As a result, St. Mary's Church has one of the most beautiful sanctuaries in the diocese.

Father Krukkert died of a heart attack in 1947. It was at his death that Bishop FitzSimon had a portion of the Catholic cemetery in Amarillo reserved for the burial of priests. He was the first to be interred there. Indeed, Father Krukkert belonged not to one parish but to the diocese to which he had given so much of his priestly services.

THE PRIEST MODERATOR

"Receive the Holy Spirit... "These four words, along with the imposition of hands, confer apostolic powers upon a new bishop of the church. In January, 1962, Rt. Rev. Thomas J. Drury received apostolic powers as he was consecrated bishop of the newly-established diocese of San Angelo. He was consecrated bishop by Archbishop Robert E. Lucey of San Antonio, who had ordained him a priest. Msgr. Drury was the first priest of the Amarillo diocese to become a bishop.

A span of about twenty-seven years from the above event had elapsed since this man had come to Amarillo to be ordained for the diocese. He was a native of Ireland but had come to the United States at the age of fifteen to live with a sister in St. Louis, Missouri. He was educated in St. Louis and in Atchison, Kansas. He completed his seminary studies at Kenrick Seminary, Webster Grove, Missouri. His ordination took place in Sacred Heart Cathedral, Amarillo on June 2, 1935.

Following Father Drury's ordination, we can say in truth, every day, every hour of these years have been filled with service to his fellowman, his country, and his God. His day usually begins at 6:00 a.m. and lasts until past midnight.

It was at an organizational meeting of the Amarillo Diocesan Council of Catholic Women in the fall of 1936 that I first met Father Drury. He had just been appointed moderator of the Council. He continued in this position until he left the diocese temporarily as a military chaplain. In the first years of this appointment, he was to make many trips over the diocese with Bishop Lucey as they explained the Council and inspired the women to become an organized unit. As long as he remained moderator, he attended each Deanery and Diocesan meeting, and the tremendous growth and influence of the Council was due to a great extent to his guidance.

Father Drury spent the first ten years of his priesthood in the Cathedral parish. He was an assistant until 1940 when he was made rector. The following year, in 1941, he was made pastor.

Along with his duties in the large and growing Cathedral parish, he was made director of a number of diocesan programs. Besides his duties previously mentioned, he was diocesan Director of Catholic Action, Diocesan Director of the Holy name Society, moderator for both boy and girl scouts, director of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. He kept the programs and activities all going well.

All this time, when lay organizations were stressed and extended, there was a special need for a Catholic communication media. To fill this need, *The Texas Panhandle Register* was established in 1936. In addition to his myriad other duties, Father Drury was named the first editor of this new Catholic weekly and continued in this capacity for two years.

In 1945, Father Drury asked for leave of absence from the diocese and became a chaplain in the U.S. Air Force. He served for two years. Upon his separation from the Air Force in 1947, Archbishop Lucey requested Bishop FitzSimon to permit him to work in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Here he was made moderator of the program for the Spanish-speaking people and director of Catholic Action.

In 1949, Father Drury was recalled to the Amarillo diocese to supervise the planning and erection of Gerken Hall at Price College High School. Before this project was completed, however, the Korean War had started. There was need for more chaplains with the Armed Forces and father was requested again to serve the men in military services.

Upon his return to the Amarillo diocese from his second tour of military duty, he was appointed pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Rowena. This was in 1955. He was there less than a year when he was named pastor of St. Elizabeth Parish in Lubbock. Here his foresight and vision served the Catholic population well. Lubbock was a rapidly growing city and the two existing parishes could no longer take care of the Catholic needs. Father Drury bought a sizeable plot of land on

the southwestern outskirts of the city. There he planned and supervised the building of the beautiful Christ the King plant. He became the first pastor.

While servicing in Lubbock in 1960, Father Drury was made a Domestic Prelate. And it was while pastor of Christ the King Church that he was elevated to the episcopacy.

Father Drury was well known as an organizer. His kind and sympathetic understanding of people and their problems was a great asset in getting people to accept responsibility. But it was his untiring zeal as he gave his own time and effort to any and every project which brought results.

THE PRIEST-PASTOR

"Joseph Most Just,
Joseph Most Prudent,
Joseph Most Obedient,
Joseph Most Faithful,
Mirror of Patience ..."

If the name of John were substituted for Joseph, it would give a very real description of the Rt. Rev. John Steinlage, affectionately known as Father John. Father John typifies the 'priest-pastor', the 'father' of his flock. He is also a very competent administrator, as we shall see.

John Steinlage was born in Iowa. He received his seminary education at the Josephinum Seminary, Columbus, Ohio. He was ordained for the priesthood in 1927 for the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa. There he served for three years after his ordination. He heard the call of Bishop Gerken for priests in the mission diocese of Amarillo. He was one of the first to heed this call and arrived in the See city in August, 1930. His first assignment was as rector and teacher at the newly-established St. George College.

It was not an easy task keeping the school in operation those first years. It really operated 'on a shoestring'. The faculty had to be obtained from among the local priests, food must be provided, funds were almost non-existent. Even the preparation of the meals was a problem until the arrival in 1933 of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate who took over the domestic duties of the school. The title, 'rector', included some unusual duties. He might be a plumber one day, a cook the next. One duty that fell to the rector was looking after the college farm. Bishop Gerken had purchased the farm with a dual purpose in mind. One purpose was that some food for the boarding students would be provided; the other was that jobs would be available for those unable to pay full tuition. It proved to be an unprofitable venture and was later sold.

Father John continued as administrator until 1935 when he was named pastor of St. Francis parish with its missions of St. Theresa in Panhandle and St. John in Borger.

In 1938, Father Steinlage was made a Domestic Prelate with the title of Rt. Rev. Monsignor. Later, in 1954, he was made Protonotary Apostolic. Msgr. Steinlage was named to the Diocesan

Board of Administration in 1944. In 1954, he was named Vicar General of the diocese. In 1945, Msgr. Steinlage was appointed pastor of the Sacred Heart Cathedral where he remained for fourteen years.

When the Catholic Children's Home (then called the Bernard Gordon Memorial Home) was just getting started in 1959, Monsignor (Father John) was asked to go to Panhandle and assume pastoral duties at St. Theresa parish and to be administrator of the Home. Again, he met the challenge. That the Children's Home is now operating smoothly and free of debt is due to a very great extent to Father John's dedication and ability.

In 1963 when the dream of a home for the aged became a reality in the building of St. Ann's Home, the bishop turned again to his 'trustworthy right hand'. Father was put in charge of this institution along with his other duties previously mentioned. Again the qualities displayed are like a litany: justness, prudence, obedience, faithfulness, patience. With these qualifications, he has built and directed a home for the elderly people of the area in which we all take pride.

Indeed, if it were possible to remove from this diocese the work and influence of the Rt. Rev. John Steinlage, there would be a great vacuum. He is one whom the laity love and upon whom his superiors can depend.

THE AMARILLO DCCW

My introduction to the Council of Catholic Women was at a National Convention in Denver, Colorado, in the fall of 1930. His Excellency, Bishop Gerken, had asked the women of the diocese to attend this meeting as 'observers'. Mrs. R. J. Kiser and I went from Pampa representing Holy Souls Altar Society. Nothing came of this, however, and it was several years later under His Excellency, Bishop Lucey, that plans were set in motion for a Diocesan Council in this diocese.

The following year, in 1937, a diocesan convention was held in Amarillo. Mrs. Lane was elected president, an office she held for the following two years. It was at this convention that our bishop gave us the slogan: "It Can Be Done".

From the very beginning the women of the diocese were enthusiastic in regard to the Council. Often women traveled over one hundred miles to attend a district meeting and even three hundred miles to attend a diocesan convention. For several years, two district meetings in each district and one diocesan convention were held each year. During World War II, one of the district meetings was discontinued. It has been a practice from the beginning of the council for the bishop and moderator and the diocesan president to attend each district and diocesan meeting.

Bishop Lucey realized the need of an informed laity. With this in view, he asked that study clubs be stressed. The title of our first study was "Altar and Sanctuary". In the following year came a

study of "The Mass". These were followed by "The Life of Christ", "The Apostolic Church", "The Bible", and many others. At the end of the first year of study, 1,500 were enrolled. This included men, women, and youth groups. Religious discussion clubs have kept the laity of this diocese abreast, or perhaps ahead, of the Church's current program of Christian renewal.

There were other programs of activity set up which were patterned after the national committee system. Through the years some have been added, combined, or discontinued as the need arose. The work through all the committees has had great influence on parish and community life. The accomplishments of the Library and Literature Committee could not be measured; the Home-School, Family and Parent Education committee have done much to promote Catholic education and better family life; the Charity Committee has ever been alert to those in need; the Social Action Committee has dealt with problems concerning civic needs of the under-privileged and minority groups; the Legislative Committee kept local groups informed of pending legislation and stressed the need to become active citizens. (The National and Diocesan Councils function no longer under the committee system but through five commissions. These commissions are Church Community, Family Affairs, Community Affairs, International Affairs, and Organizational Services.)

The war effort of World War II of the women of this diocese was tremendous. They worked in the Red Cross, the U.S.O., they sponsored retreats for the servicemen, they welcomed 'war brides', and they sent tons of new and used clothing to war-torn and backward countries. After the war, they welcomed 'displaced' persons and helped them to become integrated into parish and community life.

There have been literally hundreds of women who served in some capacity in the Amarillo DCCW and, as a result, have learned to better serve in both parish and community life. Performing their duties on the various committees, or as officers, and in attending their own planned spiritual exercises, they have become better informed and more articulate; they have learned to lead and they have grown spiritually.

The women who have served as president of the Amarillo Council are: Mrs. J. J. Lane, Amarillo; Mrs. M. F. Roche, Pampa; Mrs. W. E. McNallen, Big Spring; Mrs. P. L. Bottoms, Amarillo; Mrs. R. J. Kiser, Pampa; Mrs. Edmund Loerwald, Hereford; Mrs. Edward Drerup, Littlefield; Mrs. J. W. Garman, Pampa; Mrs. J. M. Carrol, Borger; Mrs. Fred Haiduk, White Deer; Mrs. Lawrence Jentzen, Vega; Mrs. C. M. Starkey, Lubbock; Mrs. J. E. Healy, Odessa; Mrs. Walter Kale, Borger; Mrs. John Horgan, Amarillo. And now, we have gone full circle and again elected Mrs. Edmund Loerwald to head the Council.

My recollections of the DCCW would not be complete unless I included a story of Adeline Loerwald. At the very first meeting of the then Amarillo District which was held in Pampa, Adeline was a delegate from the youth group of St. Anthony's parish in Hereford. I remember that she and two or three others gave a skit. Adeline was a bride then. Through the years she has

been a familiar figure at deanery and diocesan meetings as she reared her family, yet never shirking an office or a task given her. Now with her family fairly well grown, she accepts again the leadership of the Council with the hard work and responsibilities that go with the office. (1966)

The women of the Amarillo DCCW have always represented well their diocese. A number of them have been participants in both regional and national conventions and have made worthwhile contributions. Three women have served on the board of the National Council. Mrs. J. J. Berg of St. Francis was national chairman of the Committee on Rural Life; Mrs. Fred Haiduk of White Deer served as national co-chairman of this same committee and later was elected a National Director from the Fifth Province and made third vice president; and myself who served one term as national co-chairman of the Committee on Immigration.

The program of the Council has been dear to the heart of each succeeding bishop, and each has lent his encouragement, guidance and support.

It was my privilege to be active in the Council for a number of years; first, in its organizational period under Bishop Lucey and later in more advanced growth under Bishops FitzSimon and Morkovsky as well as under the guidance of Father Drury as its first Moderator and later under Father Francis Smyer. Through this experience, I have developed an appreciation of my religion and lasting spiritual values of which I might have been deprived. Indeed, I can say truthfully, serving in the Amarillo DCCW in various positions was a thorough training period for me in both religious and civic life.

THE TAR-PAPER CHURCH

There are two small mission churches which deserve a place in the history of the early development of this diocese. Each has been the object of much good-natured criticism. One was the small building at Rankin which was referred to by the priests of the diocese as the 'Tin Cathedral'. This building was bought from an oil company and was made of corrugated, galvanized metal. Incidentally, this was the last church completed during Bishop Gerken's episcopate. The 'Tin Cathedral' of the south had its counterpart in the 'Tar Paper' church at Borger.

When the tar-paper church was built, the town of Borger was not a year old. Buildings had sprung up on the open prairie like mushrooms after a rain. The developing oil and gas industry was uncertain. Such oilfield towns, having sudden birth and depending entirely upon one industry, could not be assured of permanency. If such a town survived, sometimes the population shifted rather quickly in one direction or another.

A portable altar was part of the equipment of all missionary priests. They had to be prepared to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass in unusual places. Sometimes it was in a theater, a civic hall, a residence, or the rear of the priest's car under the open sky. The few Catholics in Borger had

just such a problem. Mass was being offered in the dining room of Mrs. Gray's Boarding House. Under these circumstances, it was decided to construct a temporary building at a minimum cost and await developments of the town. A rough frame building was erected which was covered with tar paper, including the outside and the inside walls and the roof. The flooring was substantial but with a few cracks which gave the ushers a little concern when coins were dropped. There were enough windows for sufficient light and the roughly made pews would seat probably one hundred people. A confessional was installed in the rear of the building. But what was important: **HERE WAS A CHURCH AND AN ALTAR!**

In the early part of the summer of 1927, Bishop Gerken visited the parish in Borger and brought dignity to the little church with his presence. Father Krukkert was still the pastor at this time. In making preparations for the official visit of the bishop, Father was concerned about having a suitable chair for him during the services.

Almost all the parishioners in Borger felt that they were there on a temporary stay and house furnishings were meager, if, indeed, one was lucky enough to have a house! But the spirit of ecumenism was abroad in the land even then. A good Presbyterian family, Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Kelley, who seemed to have more faith in the town than most of its inhabitants, had built a substantial house and furnished it. They graciously offered the 'host' chair of their dining room suite. Placed in the sanctuary, it became the bishop's throne for the day.

Another instance that occurred one Sunday during Mass soon after the completion of the church remains vivid in the minds of all who were present that day. Anyone familiar with the moods of the Panhandle weather, the capricious winds and the biting dust, will appreciate this incident.

As the Holy Sacrifice was being offered, a gale hit the building with sudden fury. Attention was turned for a moment to the sandstorm outside. Sounds of material being torn were heard and curiosity turned to consternation as a few realized the building was losing its roof. A half dozen men quickly left the service, and soon the sound of hammers could be heard above the whistling of the wind.

The tar paper church was only a foundation on which to work and build. As one sees the established churches of the diocese today and learns of the active life in each parish, the importance of the foundation becomes more significant. The Catholic people of this area provided a much firmer foundation upon which to build than it at first appeared to be.