

CATHOLIC STANDARD

53rd YEAR

FIRST QUARTER

MARCH. 1957

Published for the Bishop of Georgetown
by the Sword of the Spirit.



Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

One Hundred Years with the Jesuits in British Guiana

1857, – 1957

Part V: Bishop Weld, S.J.

Bishop George Weld, S.J. **Vicar Apostolic, 1932 – 1953**



Right Reverend GEORGE WELD, S.J.
Titular Bishop of Mallo
Consecrated: Whit Sunday, 1932
Vicar Apostolic to September, 1953.

On the 18th January, 1932, came the Appointment of Fr. George Weld as Titular Bishop of Mallo and Vicar Apostolic in succession to Bishop Galton.

As Head Master of St. Stanislaus College for the previous eight years during which time he forged the pace that had brought the College to its top ranking position of today, Fr. Weld had made a place for himself not only among Catholics but in the general community. That same intense capacity for work, care and attention to detail was now to be carried into a greater sphere.

As Bishop-elect he proceeded to England and was consecrated on Whitsunday of the same year in Westminster Cathedral by Cardinal Archbishop Bourne, assisted by Archbishop Goodier, S.J., (Titular Bishop of Hierapolis) and Bishop Brown (Titular Bishop of Pela). Much as he would have liked to have been consecrated in his own Cathedral, the city, whose material resources at this stage had been already drained to build that Cathedral, should not be asked to meet a further call which the holding of the ceremony here would necessarily have involved. Thus even in this, lay a very real concern for his flock.

Nursing Sisters

Immediately following his consecration, Bishop Weld proceeded for his first visit to Rome. While there, he completed arrangements for the coming to this colony of the Czechoslovakian nuns to take over the nursing at the Leper Hospital, Mahaica. Being non-British, they had required the sanction of the Colonial Office which had been granted in January. Bishop Weld now obtained the approval of Propaganda, and the first eight sisters arrived in British Guiana in October of the same year. In a release to the daily press of the time, the Honourable Dr. P. James Kelly, then Surgeon General, made it clear to the public that the nuns had been officially invited to take over leper work and that the attendants hitherto engaged in it, would be found good occupation in other institutions. He also pointed out that it had been very difficult to get trained nurses for the work in the past.

With this grand start, Bishop Weld returned to his Vicariate, calling first at Barbados where he administered the Sacrament of Confirmation for the first time. Here he was pleased to visit the Ursuline Convent, started since 1894, and also St. Patrick's Elementary School, the first and to this day, the only Catholic Elementary School in the Island, which had just been started by the Ursuline Nuns. Writing back from Barbados to British Guiana, the Bishop said "The Elementary School is doing well, it started with eight and has reached 67, although they are only taking Catholics and refusing the other ones. It is a question of how to get on without further teachers - a problem which was to remain with the Bishop throughout his term of office.

So in September, 1932, the Bishop returned to British Guiana to begin his long term of work. In reviewing the progress of Bishop Weld's Episcopate, two words come to mind - "quiet" and "calm". The work of his predecessors had brought the Vicariate to the stage where it was ready and waiting for action in all directions to continue its development. So quietly and so calmly did the new Bishop set to work that few could have fully realised at the time the extent of the achievements seen in retrospect today.

Churches, Schools

Bishop Etheridge we have seen as a builder of Churches. Bishop Weld in his time added new Churches - at Springlands, Alness, Dantzic, Campbellville, Meadowbank (to replace the one destroyed by fire), Diamond, Mackenzie, Potaro, Leguan, Henrietta (rebuilt), Siriki in the Pomeroun, Mabaruma and rebuilt the church at Morawhanna.

Bishop Butler's was the Episcopate of the Schools, when the number of Catholic Elementary Schools grew from seven to thirty-one. In Bishop Weld's Episcopate, the number increased from thirty-four to fifty Catholic Schools.

Missions

Bishop Galton - the Missioner - had opened up the interior. Here lay a field that was very dear to Bishop Weld's heart. Of his sixteen new schools, eleven lay in the Rupununi and Pakaraima area. Like Bishop Galton he was to travel over the whole area in the early days of very difficult transport. Then he was to witness the introduction of the air lift from Georgetown to the Rupununi, and, following on this, the use of motor transport in the savannahs. The continuous work of Father Keary and Father Mather from St. Ignatius, joined later by Father Banham working in the Pakaraimas, was to be further extended in the setting up of another headquarters at Sand Creek in the Southern Savannah under Father Mc Kenna in 1949. The word "transport" opens up a new phase and a new problem in Bishop Weld's Episcopate: the provision of motor vehicles - heavy landrovers - for the Rupununi and North West Districts, of boats for the North West, Moruka and Pomeroun Districts, and of cars for the ever lengthening distances covered by his priests on all the coastal missions as their work extended further afield.

North West

The headquarters of the Sisters of Mercy in the North West District had been established at Hosororo with a second convent at Morawhanna. Early in the 1940's the Local Government Offices were transferred from Morawhanna to Mabaruma. As Mabaruma was, in consequence, being more

developed, the Convent was transferred there and a new school and church built.

Working along 55 miles of river, from these bases, the Missionaries opened up centres and schools so that today, besides the Churches and schools at Mabaruma and Hosororo, and the Church still remaining at Morawhanna, there are no less than seven schools on the Barima, the Aruka, the Arawau, the Koriabo and the Wauna, all of which are used as Mass centres.

In the face of all this increasing development, it only became possible right at the end of Bishop Weld's regime in 1953, to send a second priest to the District when Fr. W. Paterson joined Fr. L. J. Buckley who had been working there continuously since 1942. From Santa Rosa, the church's earliest missionary centre, the work spread out with schools founded at Kamwatta, Santa Cruz and Assacotta.

The Pomeroon mission, which obtained its first resident priest - Fr. Louis Whiteside - at St. Francis Xavier's, Charity in 1928, now saw the development of Churches and schools at Martindale, Marlborough, St. John's, and St. Louis, Siriki.

In 1940, the Church at Bartica was given its first resident priest, Fr. L. J. Buckley. From there were started the first Mass stations in the Potaro, resulting in the erection of the Church of the Holy Family at Mahdia.

Courantyne

In 1933, Fr. W. Banham was sent to Port Mourant as the first resident Priest in succession to Father Fianco who had served there for about four years from 1921. He was followed in 1938 by Fr. A. Ellis who, in the succeeding ten years, established a very special place for himself as a friend to all along the Courantyne coast. He served the new church at Springlands where, in 1950, Fr. Wilson-Browne became first resident Priest. (All this area was originally served by the priest from New Amsterdam, Mass having been said at Skeldon since before 1900).

Social Work

Alongside all this missionary development, the social work, already so well started by Bishop Weld's predecessors, continued intensively.

In 1935 the Sisters of Mercy succeeded the Czechoslovakian Sisters at the Leper Hospital at Mahaica. The Sisters of Mercy in British Guiana had now become incorporated in the Scranton province of the American Sisters of Mercy so that it became possible to obtain Nursing Sisters from the United States. Such had been the initial good work of the Czechoslovakian Sisters that there were great demonstrations on the part of the inmates on their departure. The Sisters of Mercy were now to take on the work. So, the interest in this institution which had been such a notable feature of the previous Bishops, was maintained. Throughout Bishop Weld's regime there was always a priest serving on the official board of visitors; for a long time this was Father Morrison, the Superior, who was followed by the succeeding superior, Father R. L. Guilly.

The number of conferences of both the St. Vincent De Paul Society and the Ladies of Charity and the scope of their work increased from year to year. Along with the regular visiting of the poor in their homes and in institutions, youth work developed. The Catholic Youth Organisation was started for boys

with sections working in different parts of Georgetown, and a fine central club room was set up in Georgetown. Similarly, work was started by the Ladies of Charity for girls.

It was Bishop Weld's Episcopate that witnessed the introduction of the intensive participation of the laity in the work of the Church - the Work of Catholic Action. This was crystallized into being by the formation in 1943 of the Sword of the Spirit Movement in this country. Based on the work of the parent movement founded in England by Cardinal Hinsley, it aimed through "a plan of prayer, study and action to assist the Bishop and clergy of the Vicariate in spreading the reign of Christ." Its basic work lay in the study of the social teaching of the Church done in groups, but from its central executive came the establishment of the Catholic Library in Georgetown; the Catholic Hospital run by the Sisters of Mercy; the Catholic Birth, Benefit and Burial Society (whose work the Bishop saw as so important in providing the insurances required by the small man); and the Sword of the Spirit Credit Union..



Fr. FRANCIS C. FENN, S.J.
Bishop Weld's secretary,
Editor of the "Catholic Standard",
Director of Studies for the Sword of the Spirit.

Throughout the difficult years of the war when it was well nigh impossible to obtain more priests, Bishop Weld maintained that the work of the Church instead of being retarded went forward with new life with the help of the laity in Catholic action.

The monthly Catholic Standard started in 1905 by Bishop Galton was taken over by the Sword of the Spirit and further developed, and the Catholic Broadcast which had already existed as a twice monthly programme was turned into a weekly feature. The Sword of the Spirit offered to Catholics new opportunities for study and appreciating their faith and joining in the works of the Church, in all of which they had the support and encouragement of the Bishop.

From its inception Fr. F. C. Fenn was Director of Studies, to be joined, on his arrival here in this Country as Superior, by our present Bishop as Spiritual Director of the Movement.

Public Meetings

Public meetings were sponsored at which laymen appeared on the platform side by side with the clergy. On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Rerum Novarum (Leo XIII) a public meeting was held in the Georgetown Town Hall, setting forth the teaching of the Pope. Arising out of this celebration, at the Bishop's request, two associations were formed: of Catholic Workers and of Catholic Employers. The greatest practical result of this study of Papal Social Doctrine was the launching by the Catholic Employers Association in 1954 of the Family Allowance Scheme, the first of its kind in South America. Similarly, in the next episcopate to mark the Silver Jubilee of

Quadragesimo Anno, came the issuing by the Catholic Employers Association of a Code for Employers and Executives which was published in both the **Catholic Standard** and the local press. Following on the Sword of the Spirit came the formation of the Conference of Catholic Societies, to which Societies, Guilds and their various sections throughout the Colony were invited to belong. At an Annual Meeting at which representatives of all these Societies were present, Bishop Weld introduced the custom, now maintained as a regular feature, of giving a review of the year's activities in the development of the Church. In this way, the laity were given a very vivid insight into the Bishop's plans and hopes and the needs of the Vicariate, and so began to get some appreciation of the tremendous amount of work being attempted and still required to be done.

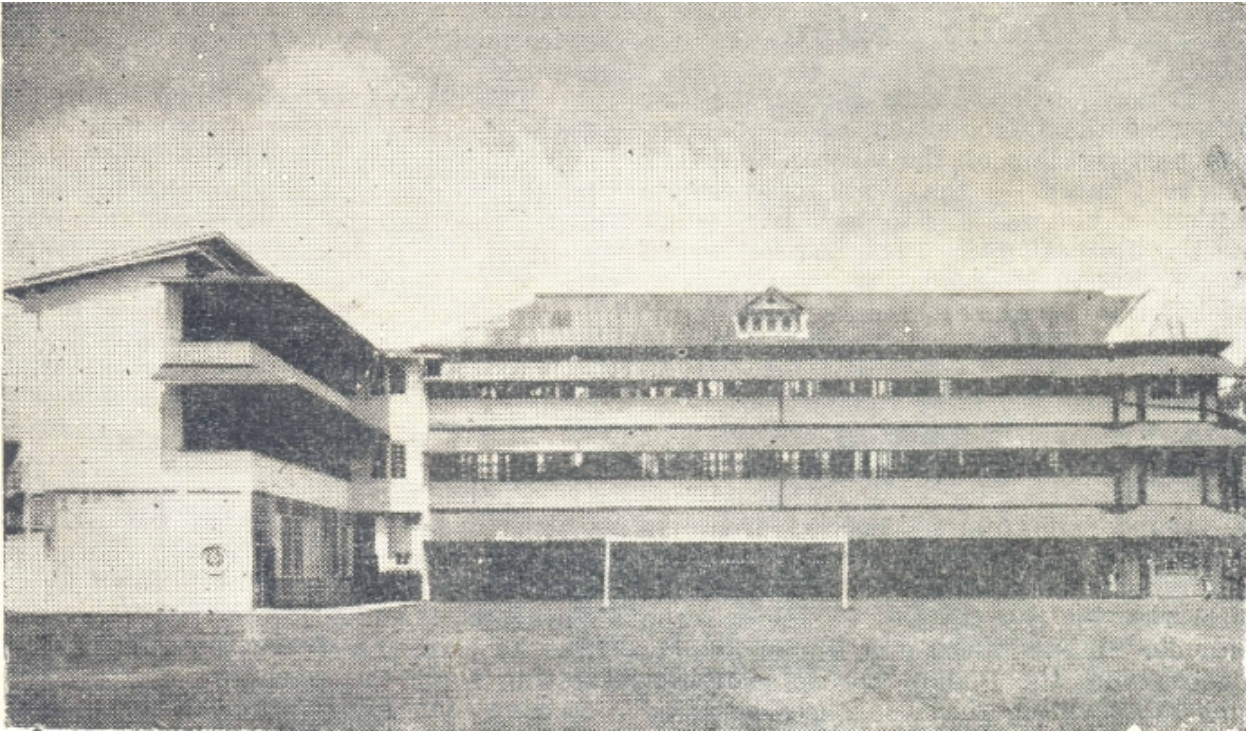
The number of priests in the Vicariate was never sufficient to cope with all there was to be done. Nevertheless the number was steadily increasing and, to support them as well as to develop the many Missions, Bishop Weld introduced the "Vicariate Sustenance Fund", to which he invited all who could afford it to make regular contributions each year. It was at Meetings of the Conference of Catholic Societies that the Bishop would reveal the extent to which this fund had enabled him to work, taking his listeners from one end of the Colony to the other.

Relief

The close of the war provided a very welcome relief to the Vicariate in the arrival here, in 1946, of five new priests to assist in the work - the largest single reinforcement perhaps since the arrival of the first nine Jesuits in 1857. The new priests were Fr. R. L. Guilly, Fr B. Mc Kenna, Fr, F. Edgcombe, Fr. H. Feeny and Fr. T. Lynch. Fr. Guilly now took over as Superior from Fr. Morrison, who had served in this capacity since 1927, and who was now at last able to have a well earned rest, after which he joined the mission in Barbados.

The new Superior's first work and for a number of years now was precisely to relieve the Fathers who for so long had been over-worked. In 1948, the English Provincial Fr. Martin D'Arcy visited the country and was able to see for himself the urgent need for more priests who, from now on, began to come rapidly into this country. In fact during Bishop Weld's term of office no less than thirty-seven new priests came into the Vicariate.

During his term of office there was started in this country, the United Christian Front, now known as the Christian Social Council on which the Bishop's representative met with the heads of religions denominations in the Colony, and which was responsible for issuing statements on family life, education and kindred subjects.



St. Stanislaus College, Georgetown

In 1952, Bishop Weld had the pleasure of blessing the new wing of the St. Stanislaus College which was officially opened by His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government the Hon. John Gutch. It was symptomatic of the development of schools - secondary and primary - in the Vicariate.

In Barbados, the Ursuline Convent High School was ever expanding and developed a boarding school of well over 100 girls. Meanwhile, St. Patrick's Elementary School which, at the beginning of his episcopate, had numbered 67 pupils, now had a school roll of over 800.

Public Processions

The close of Bishop Weld's Episcopate was to witness a series of public demonstrations of the faith that had so long been nurtured here. There began the annual feature of the public procession of the Blessed Sacrament from the Cathedral along Brickdam to St. Stanislaus College and back, on the Feast of Christ the King.

In celebration of the Holy Year of 1950, there was the procession from the Sacred Heart Church, Main Street, to the Cathedral. 1950 also witnessed the first visit of Fr. Patrick Moore of the Scarborough Foreign Mission Society with the Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima. Processions through the open streets were a continuous feature not only in Georgetown but throughout the country. The Proclamation of the Doctrine of the Assumption in this year was also marked by a procession and open air service in the grounds of St. Stanislaus College. Further evidence of the spiritual work of the Church was the return to work here of the country's first four Jesuit Priests :-Fr. Anselm Marques, Fr. John King, the St. Lucian-born Fr. Sydney Boase, and Fr. Herman De Caires. The number of local vocations to the Religious Life, both of boys and girls, was on the increase.

Ordination

Then, on the 28th February, 1954, in the Cathedral in Georgetown, Bishop Weld raised to the priesthood Fr. Simeon Campbell, O.S.B. from the monastery of Mount St. Benedict, Trinidad. So, for the first time in living memory Catholics in British Guiana were privileged to witness an ordination. Fr. Campbell, over 70 years of age, was a retired Government Medical Officer of British Guiana. Accompanied by his Abbot from Mount St. Benedict, he came to be ordained in his homeland.

Bishop Weld's episcopate, which opened with the arrival of the Czechoslovakian Sisters, was to be blessed by the coming of two further religious communities :-first the Corpus Christi Carmelite Sisters, in 1949, who took over the working Girls' Hostel started by the Ladies of Charity in Georgetown, and later opened another convent at Springlands.

Scarboro Fathers

Then at the very end of his term of office, as almost his parting gift to the Vicariate, the Bishop was to invite the Fathers of the Scarboro Foreign Mission Society to come and share the work of the Jesuit Fathers in British Guiana. The first four Scarboro Fathers,- the Very Reverend E. Moriarty, Superior, Fr. A. MacIntosh, Fr. B. J. Kirby and Fr. J. McNamara arrived in the Colony on the 8th of October, 1953, and were immediately given by the Bishop the Parishes of New Amsterdam and Port Mourant, Berbice. Next, the Bishop set up a new parish in Eastern Georgetown - the Parish of Our Lady of Fatima - and put them in charge, almost the last act of his episcopate. This Georgetown parish became their headquarters, and their work was extended to take in the whole of Berbice.

With all this increase in development the Bishop had been working under a serious handicap of increasing deafness which, with his advancing age, caused him to appeal to the Holy Father to he allowed to resign his office, and his resignation was accepted in September, 1953. He remained, however, Administrator Apostolic until the appointment of his successor in the following year.

Bishop Weld's tremendous work was not to go unrecognized. In 1954, from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, came the decoration of the C.B.E. Then, in 1955, like his first Jesuit predecessor, Bishop Etheridge, he was to be named by the reigning Pontiff - now Pius XII-an Assistant to the Pontifical Throne.

End of Part V:

Click to view the other Sections	
Part I:	<u>Catholic Standard First Quarter March 1957</u>
Part II:	<u>Bishop Etheridge, S.J.</u>
Part III:	<u>Bishop Butler, S.J.</u>
Part IV:	<u>Bishop Galton, S.J.</u>
Part V:	<u>Bishop Weld, S.J.</u>
Part VI:	<u>Bishop Guilly S.J.</u>
Part VII:	<u>St. Stanislaus College</u>
Part VIII:	<u>Jubilarians</u>
Part IX:	<u>Priests of the Century</u>
Part X:	<u>Rupununi Mission</u>
Part XI:	<u>Kurikabaru</u>