



The R. Wayne Kraft Memorial Lecture

***Bishop McShea's Vision
for Allentown College
... 40 Years Later!***

by

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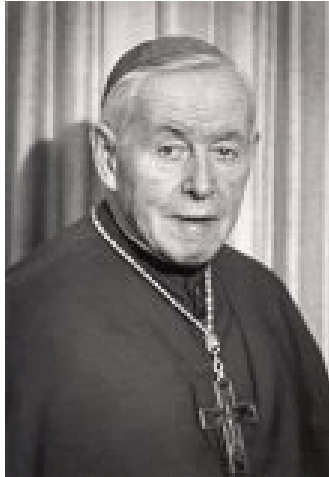
DeSales University
Heritage Week Celebrations



January 26, 2006

THE MOST REVEREND JOSEPH M. MCSHEA, D.D.

founding bishop of the Diocese of Allentown (PA)



Born: February 22, 1907, in Lattimer, Luzerne County

Educated: Transfiguration of the Lord Parish School, Philadelphia, and West Catholic High School, Philadelphia

Prepared for Priesthood: Entered St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Overbrook, Philadelphia, in 1923, and Pontifical Roman Seminary and the Lateran University, Rome, Italy, in 1926, Earning a Doctorate in Philosophy. Received a Doctorate of Theology in 1932.

Ordained a Priest: December 6, 1931, by the Late Francesco Cardinal Marchetti-Selvaggiani, Vicar of Rome.

First and Most Satisfying Assignment: Professor at St. Charles Seminary, Teaching Latin, Italian, and History.

Other Assignments: In the Roman Curia to Serve in the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church (1935-38); Secretary to the Papal Delegate in Washington, D.C. (1938-52); Titular Bishop of Mina, Auxiliary Bishop to the Archbishop of Philadelphia and Pastor of St. Francis De Sales Church, Philadelphia.

Consecrated a Bishop: March 19, 1952, in Philadelphia Cathedral Basilica of Ss. Peter and Paul by Archbishop Amleto Cicognani.

Episcopal Motto: “Sub Umbra Petri” (“In the Shadow of Peter”).

Installed as Bishop of Allentown: April 11, 1961, in Allentown Cathedral of St. Catharine of Siena by Edigio Cardinal Vagnozzi.

Retired as Bishop of Allentown: February 8, 1983.

Thank you all. I consider it a singular privilege and a joy to accept this kind invitation to speak of our founding father, that revered prelate who forged this portion of God's people described in the *Annuario Pontificio* as "Alanapolitana."

Where does one start to recall all the special events, all those effective programs, all those series of firsts that were ours as a new diocese -- born, fledgling, come of age?

We begin with the person of Joseph McShea, our first chief shepherd called to preach and teach and sanctify. That was his office, and for all of us he was in that office always and everywhere mighty like a bishop -- an extraordinary ordinary!

Bishop McShea had the first requisite for success: he believed in himself! How often he would say, "I'm the bishop" -- to politicians, to state police who stopped him for speeding, to people who would not let him go ahead in lines at the store. We who knew him can hear him now at the heavenly gates and courts: "I'm the bishop."

Bishop McShea an extraordinary ordinary!

The day after tomorrow we will celebrate the 45th anniversary of the establishment of that portion of God's people today known as the Diocese of Allentown. On that day Blessed John XXIII of happy memory signed the document creating the diocese of Allentown ("Alanapolitana"), and he chose the beloved son of Roger and Jeanette Beach McShea as one "especially suited for the task" to be our first bishop. In so many ways we have learned and were reminded by the good bishop himself over the years what a wonderful creation this was, and what a remarkable first bishop we had.

In an interview years later, Bishop McShea spoke of his coming to Allentown with great affection and described it as "going to heaven without the inconvenience of dying." And as for himself he considered it truly remarkable, since he was in his words the first bishop to leave Philadelphia and take half of it with him.

Just an aside ... Whenever he was invited to participate in a celebration, he always told me to put his name down for remarks ... after all, he was the "remarkable" bishop of Allentown!

This fledgling diocese, if you will, his new born baby, was his greatest love and fondest challenge. As the Army's slogan reads, his invitation, his charge to his flock was simple and direct, "be all that you can be." (Or, to use the slogan of St. Francis de Sales: "be who you are, and be that well.")

Bishop McShea was a wonderful teacher, a true craftsman when it came to forging a future for this nascent local Church, and with careful words and studied action he energetically and systematically began to build a future of hope for God's people in this diocese.

As a student of history and a man ever sensitive to ethnic diversity, he set forth to unite his people in a communion of faith and good works that would build up the body of Christ and make the Catholic Church's presence felt in the five county area of east central Pennsylvania.

Bishop McShea was a man of vision -- with a purpose. His purpose and mission was to establish our identity and make it known as both a strong and vibrant local Church -- so proud of its Roman Catholic heritage and ever faithful to the See of Peter. We were to be in his mind always and everywhere "*sub umbra petri.*"

This was a new diocese – a new identity – and it hit the ground running. This would be no caboose on a Philadelphia train.

Pope John Paul the Great, that giant Churchman of our times, so often during his pontificate spoke of the need for *solidarity* in our Catholic faith and in our living out of the social teachings of our Catholic Church. I would not presume to call our dear friend Bishop McShea a prophet -- nor do I think you would -- but there was something so very prophetic in the words he spoke on the 11th of April, 1961, at his solemn installation as our first bishop:

"All through the nineteenth century, vast numbers of Catholics poured into the five-county area of this diocese in a steady flow of immigration from Ireland, Germany, Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean shores. They came seeking a new livelihood, new freedom, both political and religious. Those faithful Catholic immigrants were already fused in the solidarity of their Catholic faith and in the warmth of the charity of Christ which burned in their hearts. Tenaciously, they have adhered to this sacred legacy through the generations."

Yes, bishop McShea saw well what he had, and with a keen mind for history and a profound sense of the moment he realized that it was the solidarity of our people's faith and the warmth of their charity that had to be tapped and nurtured and fostered and fanned so that the flame would grow and the fire would spread -- and Christ's word would be known and felt and loved.

And he surely could write -- that twist of phrase. He so often said that the simple declarative sentence was the greatest rhetorical device. Once when I first began to draft a response to a letter for him, I opened with "I was delighted to receive your letter" The good bishop handed it back. "Al," he reminded me, "I am rarely delighted."

Joseph McShea *sub umbra petri*

An old Irish musician once said, "that which comes from the heart, goes to the heart." He was speaking of music. But that phrase might best describe how Joseph McShea lived and loved what is called *romanità*. In fact bishop McShea had always considered his time spent in Rome beginning at the Pontifical Roman Seminary a special natural grace -- sent there in the 1920's to continue and complete his formation on the road to the priesthood.

Rome, the Holy See, the Chair of Peter, our Holy Father were the loves of his life, and the great desire of his heart was to be there -- *ubi petrus, ibi ecclesia*. From the moment he set foot on Italian soil in the autumn of 1926 up until the very day of his death November 28, 1991, he lived his life as a seminarian, priest, then bishop literally *sub umbra petri*.

His ecclesiastical career explains his evident veneration for the Chair of Peter. He was born on the 22nd of February -- the very day of the feast of the chair. And he lived ever faithful, ever disposed, and always attached to the heart of the Church -- the seat of Peter. His was a passionate and noble service. He knew that to serve the Church well he had to be *fortes in fide*, in love with the priesthood, and yet be a man of great understanding and compassion. He had a strong ecclesial spirit and with this attitude and understanding "where there is Peter, there is the Church" he knew the only way to live and move and have his being, was in the shadow of Peter.

The bishop had a practical rule of thumb in governing our diocese: whatever the pope permits, I permit, whatever the pope promotes, I promote ... and the contrary.

There were really three loves of his life: the Lord, the Church, and our Blessed Mother:

He loved his Lord because he loved his priesthood of which he enjoyed the fullness! "I am the bishop" he was wont to say, and nobody ever doubted it.

He loved the Church, its teaching, its doctrine, its liturgy and especially its people (the "gens sancta"). His priests and his people who lived with him those 30 years or so knew how proud he was of them, of his spouse the Church.

He loved our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of confidence. He went to her with every pastoral concern or personal problem. This childlike trust in Our Lady was a very private way for him to manifest his love.

Everyone can remember with a smile how he would finish every confirmation dialogue with the children asking if they would say at least a half a Hail Mary for the bishop! And other stories are easy to recall:

In one parish rife with the spirit of liturgical reform, during the offertory procession a woman dressed in flowing white garments did a liturgical dance up the middle aisle. Recalling the story of King Herod and John the Baptist, the bishop turned to the pastor and said, "if she next asks for your head on a platter, she'll have it."

At another parish, when all were seated, an eager photographer decided to get a closer vantage point and moved forward down the aisle. The bishop promptly stood and announced: "Good morning, Mr. Camera Man. So glad you could join us. Since it's crowded, Monsignor here will help you find a seat, Mr. Camera Man."

And then there's the Catechism. To help the faithful of the diocese, Bishop McShea worked out a deal that a new publication of the Catechism would be made. It would bear on its cover the name of the Diocese. We worked endless nights proofreading it. Thousands and thousands of copies were produced. Then, at breakfast the day after they were delivered, I noticed that the book made reference to the priest's stole being worn in a crisscross way. But we don't do that anymore. "Bishop," I hesitantly said, "there's a mistake in here about the priest's vestments." He looked at it and handed the book back. "Yes, Al, "he opined, "I'm sure there will be many folks lying awake tonight worrying about that one."

"That which comes from the heart goes to the heart." I think this great man of the Church touched all of our hearts with the warm human touch that comes from the heart of a shepherd.

The Birth of a College

One day in the early 1960's four Oblates of St. Francis De Sales visited with Bishop McShea. (Bishop Thompson called them "the four horsemen.") They wanted to ask Bishop McShea about taking over a retreat house in the diocese of Allentown. These men of happy memory were: Fr. John Conmy, Fr. William Stahl, Fr. John Tocik, and Fr. Stuart Dooling.

Now Bishop McShea, when he had them comfortably on his own turf, said to these Oblate fathers: "You don't have a college; we don't have a college. Let's put the two problems together and come up with a solution."

The Oblates left that meeting with the bishop only to come back with a "yes" to this proposal. Bishop McShea grubstaked them to the tune of \$2,000,000 -- and the college was born!

The diocese of Allentown would now count 20 more priests -- Oblates of St. Francis De Sales. And as the bishop would say, "we got the cream of their crop!"

Bishop McShea never, ever interfered in the administration, the internal affairs of Allentown College of St. Francis DeSales. He had complete confidence in Fathers Dooling and Gambet. Bishop McShea was a firm believer in the principle of subsidiarity in the Church.

Bishop McShea's Vision for Catholic Education

Over one hundred and fifty years ago St. John Neumann, the fourth bishop of Philadelphia, in his first pastoral letter, stressed the importance of organizing Catholic schools. He knew the vital importance of a strong, organized Catholic education program. He urged parents, religious congregations, and pastors to overcome whatever difficulties might arise in order to enable

Catholic schools to prosper. “All obstacles,” he said, “can be gradually overcome by mutual goodwill and cooperation.” In initiating a building program for Catholic schools, the bishop encountered no little opposition from those who considered the project financially unwise. The bishop, despite opposition, encouraged this project to build Catholic schools.

Over one hundred years later, Bishop Joseph McShea of Allentown, Pennsylvania, in his report to Rome on the state of affairs in that same area where Neumann had previously labored, echoed the strong feelings of the fourth bishop of Philadelphia in his quest to evangelize.

“Today’s intellectuals sneer at bishops who build, but these buildings are the indispensable tools of every form of apostolate. Thank God that the generosity of our people and the dedication of our priests and religious make these works possible.”

Catholic education, and in our case here the dream of a Catholic college, is a special means that the bishop as chief teacher of his diocese chose to fulfill his mission to teach as Jesus did. The message, the good news of Jesus Christ, permeates the entire school day in Catholic colleges. Inspired by Catholic intellectual tradition, a Catholic college in Allentown would educate students to be morally responsible leaders who would think critically, act wisely, and work skillfully to advance the common good.

The college is a community of faith based on the life of the spirit. The community is not a community unto itself, but just as Jesus fed the multitude so the special characteristic of this community is service.

Catholic colleges are different in what they teach: God, Christ, Church, Christian life, morality.

Catholic colleges are different in how they teach: use of religious motivation for excellence in academic achievement and in personal conduct.

Catholic colleges are different in what they achieve: academic results, Church attendance, and personal morality.

Catholic colleges bear witness to the importance of religion in the light of our families, our communities, and of our society.

Taking deeply into his own heart the example of our Lord Jesus, Bishop McShea, as the great St. John Neumann before him, knew that the future strength of the Church was in the future of her youngest. He committed himself to a strong Catholic education system with our college as the jewel in that crown. So that even the children of the poorest mine workers would learn the fullness of the Christian message in an environment of a solid Catholic community. While catechesis of the faith was the moving factor, Neumann and McShea both were building a new Catholicism in America by educating poor immigrant youth to rise one day to their rightful place in the free world.

That was his vision. He was always the builder -- a bridge builder as bishop was considered from ancient Roman times, the "pontifex."

Even in the evening of his memory he had that vision. He reminded me of an old man in a poem I learned long ago.

An old man going a lone highway, came at the evening cold and grey to a chasm vast and deep and wide through which there flowed a sullen tide;

The old man crossed in the twilight dim, that sullen stream had no fear for him, but he stood when safe on the other side, and he built a bridge to span the tide;

"old man," said a fellow pilgrim near, "you're wasting your strength with your building here, your journey will end with the ending day, you never again will pass this way, you've crossed the chasm deep and wide, why build this bridge at evening tide?"

The old man lifted his old grey head, "good friend, in the path I've come," he said, "there follows after me today a youth whose feet must pass this way. This chasm that has been naught for me, to that fair haired youth may a pit fall be, he too, must cross in the twilight dim, good friend, I'm building this bridge for him."

As you leave this "McShea Center" on this beautiful campus of what began as Allentown College of St. Francis de Sales forty years ago, please remember our beloved founding bishop – Joseph McShea. And if you have a chance ... say half a Hail Mary for him!

Thank you.

The Reverend Monsignor **ALOYSIUS CALLAGHAN**, a priest of the Diocese of Allentown, was appointed Rector and Vice-President of the St. Paul's Seminary and School of Divinity in Minneapolis (MN) in 2005. Prior to this appointment he served as Vicar General of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA.

Msgr. Callaghan was ordained a priest in 1971 at St. Peter's Basilica (Vatican City.) In 1977 he completed a doctorate in Canon Law at the Lateran University (Rome). He served at the Vatican from 1986 to 1995, as an official with the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes and as an official with the Congregation for Bishops.

In the Diocese of Allentown, he held positions with the Tribunal, the Liturgical Commission, and the Vocations Office. He was also the personal secretary to Bishop Joseph McShea, who founded then Allentown College of St. Francis de Sales in 1964-65.



The **R. WAYNE KRAFT Memorial Lecture Series** is celebrated annually during the week in which the feast of St. Francis de Sales (January 24th) occurs and is named in honor of a highly respected professor who died in 1994.

After working as an industrial engineer, Wayne Kraft was appointed professor of metallurgy and material science at Lehigh University. In this position he held two patents and authored more than 50 articles and reports in technical and professional journals.

As an adjunct professor at Allentown College of St. Francis de Sales (now DeSales University), he lectured on, and wrote four books, about the philosophy of Teilhard de Chardin.

He served as a board member of various organizations in the city of Bethlehem and several agencies of the diocese of Allentown, in which he also ministered as a permanent deacon.

The Kraft Lecture highlights the university's celebration of the feast of ST. FRANCIS DE SALES (1567-1622), Bishop and Doctor of the Church. His legacy of theological writings and example of saintly living attest to the tradition of Christian Humanism that lies at the heart of the university's mission and philosophy.

The lecture series, endowed by the Kraft family, is designed to offer the public a humanistic viewpoint on an issue of national prominence. Ideally, the presentation also highlights the continuing relevance of Salesian spirituality in relation to issues in the contemporary world.

The **Salesian Center for Faith & Culture** at DeSales University exists to promote the interaction of faith and culture, in a mutually beneficial engagement, through academic initiatives that focus on the authentic integration of social concerns and gospel values, an integration that has been embodied in the saintly lives of FRANCIS DE SALES and JANE DE CHANTAL and that continues to be expressed today in the tradition of Christian Humanism.

The specific purpose of the Salesian Center is to investigate and disseminate Salesian spirituality in a way that impacts contemporary culture. As such, the goals of the Center are:

- to promote values essential to a *culture of life* as the cornerstone to realizing the mission of evangelization in the modern world, namely
- to foster the mutual engagement of *faith and reason* that is a characteristic feature of all Catholic higher education;
- to contribute, through specific programs, to the formation of *ethical leaders* who will put into practice the engagement of faith and culture; and
- to create the means for making a *positive social impact* in such a way that DeSales University will become recognized and known for its significant contribution to our world.

Updated news & information about the Center is available on the web at

www.desales.edu/salesian

