

PRESENTATION TO REV. FATHER D. O'NEILL, SOUTH DUNEDIN.

The Town Hall, South Dunedin, was crowded on Tuesday evening of last week by members of the congregation of St. Patrick's Basilica, South Dunedin, who had assembled to say good-bye and make a presentation to the Rev. Father D. O'Neill, who was transferred some time ago from there to Invercargill. The very large attendance and the applause which greeted Father O'Neill on appearing on the stage testified in an unmistakable manner to his popularity with the people among whom he had labored for some years. Mr J. J. Marlow, chairman of the Presentation Committee, presided, and the clergy present were the Very Rev. Father Coffey, Adm., St. Joseph's Cathedral, Rev. Fathers Delany, Tobin, and Falconer (South Dunedin), Rev. Father P. J. O'Neill (Riversdale), Rev. Fathers Liston (Rector), Morkane, M.A., Collins, Scanlan, and E. Lynch (Holy Cross College).

After some musical items had been given, Mr Marlow explained the object of the meeting, which was to make a presentation to Rev. Father O'Neill. Continuing, he said that he was not in the habit of apologising when called upon to address a public meeting, but on this occasion he felt that it would have been better if someone more qualified to do justice to the merits and good qualities of Father O'Neill had been selected for the task. They had been blessed in having among them from time to time many splendid and sterling priests, but none of them had gained in a higher degree their respect and esteem than Father O'Neill. He felt proud of the affection which the people had for Father O'Neill, an affection which he fully deserved, and he (the speaker) was greatly pleased at being the medium of making the presentation of a small but tangible token of their love. The purse of sovereigns, which he was deputed to present to their guest, would have been three times as much were it not for the many evil's made known to people recently in connection with the gold market in the Home Countries. This, with the other things he was about to read, would help to remind Father O'Neill of his many friends, who would not forget him or his work in the parish. With regard to the purse (Mr Marlow), knowing Father O'Neill's generous and charitable disposition, did not expect that he would keep the money very long. In conclusion he said that Father O'Neill took with him the best wishes of the people of South Dunedin, who prayed that every blessing would attend him in his new sphere of duties.

Mr Marlow then read the following address, which was artistically illuminated by the Sisters of Mercy:

'Dear Rev. Father, It was with feelings of keen regret that we learnt of your departure from our district. During the many years you have labored amongst us we have learnt to highly value and esteem your kindly disposition and your unselfish devotion to your priestly duties. Your zeal in ministering to the sick and dying, your charity to the poor, your warm and untiring labors for the young men, your energy and wholehearted enthusiasm for any project that you deemed useful for our spiritual advancement have endeared you to us, and stamped you as a true priest and valued friend, and will cause you to be remembered in our prayers for very many years. In conclusion, dear Father, we beg you to accept these expressions of our gratitude and the accompanying gift as a mark of our esteem and loving regard. Our fervent prayer is that God may shower down upon you His choicest graces and blessings, and that your future may be replete with every happiness.

'Signed on behalf of the Catholics of South Dunedin,

'J. J. MARLOW, Chairman of Committee.

'AUSTIN J. MISCALL, Secretary of Committee.

'30th March, 1915.'

Rev. Father Delany said that not only did he respect Father O'Neill, but he had a sincere affection for him. From the remarks of the chairman and from the address they could form an idea of the feeling of affection which the people of South Dunedin had for Father O'Neill, but he (Father Delany) could speak

from personal knowledge, for they had lived four years together, during which time they had been very happy—in fact, they were like brothers. He could therefore endorse what had been said in regard to the good qualities of Father O'Neill. The people sincerely regretted his departure, and many of them gave expression to it when speaking to him (Father Delany), and he felt certain Father O'Neill reciprocated the affection of the people. Father O'Neill was a good, zealous priest; he desired to thank him very sincerely for his work in the parish, and he prayed God would bless him, and that his work in Invercargill would be as great a success as in South Dunedin.

Very Rev. Father Coffey expressed his sincere regret at the departure of Father O'Neill from South Dunedin. He had a great affection for Father O'Neill, and the presentation that evening, coupled with the very large audience present, was evidence of the respect and esteem in which their guest was held, and bore unmistakable testimony to his worth. Possessed of the highest priestly qualities, it was no wonder that he should endear himself to old and young in the parish. The people esteemed Father O'Neill very highly, and he, on his part, had a real affection for them. Speaking for his fellow-priests, he could say that Father O'Neill was always a welcome visitor to their homes. They had the greatest affection for him, were delighted at his success in South Dunedin, and at the way in which his work was appreciated by the people there. His heart was still with the people of South Dunedin, but it would be a consolation to him to know that their prayers would follow him to his new sphere of labors.

Rev. Father O'Neill, who on rising was received with long-continued applause, said he had a very difficult task to reply to the many kind things said about him by the preceding speakers and in the address. He could say in all sincerity that he had a great regard for the people of South Dunedin, that he loved them, and that he felt deeply his departure from amongst them. During the time he had spent in the parish he had always been welcome to the homes of the people, and was treated like a son by the old people and as a brother by the young men. It was only what might be expected from their affectionate Irish hearts. As a people noted for their faith, it was only natural that they should always show respect to him as their priest, and look up to him because of his priestly character. He was sorry to leave, and to bid them farewell in the sense that he was no longer working amongst them, but he hoped from time to time to visit his many friends in the parish. He would take with him the remembrance of their kindness, and he in turn would not let his affection for them die. This parting also meant that he was to bid farewell to the neighboring clergy, at whose homes he had always received a warm welcome and whose kindness he would never forget. As far as it might be in his power, wherever he was he would have a welcome for the priests and people of Dunedin in return for the many favors shown him at all times. There were others, too, whom he should remember; these were the Sisters working in their midst. He thanked the Sisters of Mercy, who had devoted their talents to illuminating the address, and also the Little Sisters of the Poor, who were doing so much for the old people in their care. In conclusion he desired to reciprocate the good wishes expressed by Father Delany, to thank him for his many kindnesses and for his good counsel in time of need.

Later on Father O'Neill said that he had decided to keep half of the purse of sovereigns for his own use and divide the other half into three parts, one of which he would give to the Little Sisters of the Poor, one to St. Patrick's Basilica to be used as Father Delany might think fit, and the third to Holy Cross College.

Towards the close of the proceedings Mr Marlow, on behalf of the congregation, extended a welcome to Rev. Fathers Tobin and Falconer, who briefly replied.

During the evening the following contributed to an enjoyable programme of musical and other items:—Mrs E. Ryall, Misses Fenton, A. Rodden, Heffernan, and N. Kenny, Messrs J. Rodden, W. Keys, H. Atwill, and F. Perkins.

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