

# SILVER JUBILEE OF FATHER COFFEY

## PRESENTATIONS FROM THE LAITY

It was only by the merest chance that the Catholics of Dunedin found out a few weeks ago that the silver jubilee of the ordination to the priesthood of the Very Rev. Father Coffey, Adm., St. Joseph's Cathedral, would occur this month. A meeting was held, during his absence from Dunedin, for the purpose of marking in some measure the important event in the life of their pastor, and of showing him how much the people appreciated his zeal for their spiritual welfare and for the temporal affairs of the parish. It was necessary to proceed quietly in the matter, as it was felt that if the jubilarian heard of the proposed presentation he would immediately veto it. The result was that it was considered inadvisable at present to give a monetary presentation, and it was decided that the occasion should be celebrated by a social gathering and the presentation of a gold chalice. The event took place in St. Joseph's Hall on Wednesday evening, when there was a very large attendance, and the utmost enthusiasm was shown. His Lordship the Bishop attended, and among the priests present were Rev. Fathers Delany, D. O'Neill, Morkane, Collins, Corcoran, and Kavanagh.

The stage was arranged in the form of a drawing-room, and looked very attractive with its decorations, screens, pot plants, etc. The decorations of the stage were carried out by Mesdames Jackson and Foster, and Miss Heley, assisted by Messrs. McNamara and Yule. In the front of the stage were the dates in silver letters—'1890-1915.'

Mr. T. J. Hussey presided, and supporting him were Messrs. J. Hally, J. J. Marlow, J. O'Neill, and P. Carolin. A musical programme was given, and the presentations were made at an interval.

Mr. T. J. Hussey said that as chairman of the presentation committee he had been asked to say a few words before reading the address. It was not necessary for him to say much, as they all knew Father Coffey, and what he had done and was doing in the parish. It was said that what the British Empire required was strong men, the Catholic Church wanted strong men too, and the Catholics of Dunedin were fortunate in having a strong man in Father Coffey. He had been a considerable number of years in the district—17 years altogether in South Dunedin and at the Cathedral,—and he (the speaker) did not think there was anybody present who was not aware of the good work which their rev. guest had done during that time. When the question of marking his jubilee was considered it was felt, considering the many calls made just now on the people, that it would be inadvisable to make a public appeal to the people for a monetary testimonial. The committee felt, too, that any such appeal in these strenuous times would be very repugnant to Father Coffey. Later on, when there was no war in progress, and when it was likely Father Coffey would take a trip to the land of his birth, such an appeal would be made, and this would have the most earnest and whole-hearted support of the Catholics of Dunedin. Here in this city they had evidence of his courage and ability in the way in which he had undertaken the work of erecting the Christian Brothers' School, which it was expected would be opened free of debt. This was only one of the many works which he had carried out during the short period that he had been here. Not alone was Father Coffey highly esteemed by his own people, but also by non-Catholics, for there was no clergyman in the city who had won the respect of the citizens to such an extent. Father Coffey's zeal and devotedness as a priest appealed most strongly to his people, but it often occurred to the speaker that if their rev. guest that evening had not entered the sacred ministry he would have made his mark in business, or even as a politician (laughter). With these few words, he would read the following address from the Catholic laity of Dunedin to the Very Rev. Father Coffey:—

## THE ADDRESS.

'Very Rev. and Dear Father,—

'The laity of St. Joseph's Cathedral parish, Dunedin, and of the adjoining parishes of South Dunedin, North-East Valley, Kaikorai, and Morningside, offer you their sincere and affectionate congratulations on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of your ordination. You have spent nearly the whole of the last twenty-five years in this diocese, and during the last seventeen years the parishes in and around Dunedin have been so fortunate as to have been the sphere of your labors. How much these parishes owe to you it is impossible in this address even to indicate. The life of a priest is always strenuous; yours as Administrator has been full of unceasing and responsible work, undertaken with cheerful courage and performed with marked ability, energy, and success. No task has been too great to deter you, or too trivial to escape your attention. We have had in you a public representative in philanthropic work, whose abilities have reflected credit on the whole Catholic body. Succeeding generations of Dunedin Catholics will admire the enduring effects of your tireless efforts for the various Catholic institutions in our midst; and there is hardly one of your parishioners that has not to acknowledge individually the benefit of the unceasing interest you have taken in all of us. Your work amongst us has earned for you the respect and confidence of the whole community and the enthusiastic affection and admiration of your own people.

'We ask you to accept from us, as a small memento of your jubilee and a token of our feelings to you, the accompanying chalice. During the many useful years that we trust are before you we ask you to remember us in your prayers, as we promise to remember you in ours.

Signed on behalf of the Catholic laity of Dunedin,

T. J. HUSSEY,

JOHN HALLY.

Dunedin, June 15, 1915.'

At the conclusion of the reading of the address the audience rose and sang 'For he's a jolly good fellow,' and gave ringing cheers for Father Coffey.

The address, which was artistically illuminated, and framed in oak, was accompanied by a gold chalice. Other presentations were also made. Mr. Poppelwell, on behalf of St. Joseph's Choir, made a presentation of a handsome umbrella; Mr. J. Hally presented, on behalf of the A.M.D.G. Guild, a surplice with beautiful Irish crochet, the work of the members, and Mr. Carolin made the presentation of a picture from the Children of Mary.

Mr. J. J. Marlow said he had been deputed by the people of South Dunedin to offer their hearty congratulations to Father Coffey on this auspicious occasion, for they had in that district many striking monuments to his energy and business capacity. When he was appointed to South Dunedin there was no convent, and the church was only partially completed. When he left a convent had been erected, and the church was completed and furnished. In carrying out this work Father Coffey displayed marked ability, and the people did not forget it. Twenty-five years did not seem a long time when we looked back on it, but it was not so when we looked forward; still, he hoped that Father Coffey's next twenty-five years would be crowned with every blessing, and that his golden jubilee would find him hale and hearty.

His Lordship Bishop Verdon said he had been asked to say a few words, and he had the greatest pleasure in complying with the request. The priests of the diocese were closely united in the bonds of fraternal charity, they discharged their duties faithfully, and therefore the people appreciated their efforts and entertained for them sentiments of love and reverence. Father Coffey had been Administrator of the Cathedral parish for ten years, and he and the other priests had worked most zealously, and had always been ready, day or night, to labor for the spiritual welfare