

Fr. Henry J. McANULTY 80 U.S.A. * April 25, 1915 Pittsburgh, PA + June 10, 1995 Pittsburgh

The youngest of the four children in his family, he attended Central Catholic High School in his hometown, 1928-1932. After graduating with a B.A. from Duquesne University in 1936, he joined the Congregation, making his first vows on August 25, 1937 at Ridgefield, CT. Going on to the Ferndale seminary in Norwalk, CT, he earned a B.D. and was ordained there on November 11, 1940. Later in life he would receive three honorary doctorates, including one from the University of Pittsburgh.

His first assignment was to the Holy Childhood Association as assistant to Fr. Richard Ackerman, its National Director and, at the same time, as director of the Pittsburgh diocesan branch of the Association. As such, he had to visit the local Catholic grade schools periodically to talk to the children about what they would be able to do for other children throughout much of the world by becoming members of the Holy Childhood. As such schools usually do not have an auditorium, it meant that he had to address each class individually and answer the children's questions. He did this so well, adapting himself each time to their age level, that they responded enthusiastically to his appeal. After his transfer in 1944, the children remembered him and greeted his successor by asking for news about their Father Mac.

In 1944 his wish to serve as a military chaplain during the war was granted. After attending chaplain school at Harvard, he was commissioned as a lieutenant. In June of the same year he began his chaplain functions at Maxwell, Alabama, one of the busiest bases in the U.S.A. Other appointments followed in quick succession: Harlingen, TX, Banbridge, GA, Sebring, FL, and then Maxwell again, all in a twenty months period. He performed the usual duties of a chaplain: administering the sacraments, instructing converts, aiding "lost sheep" to return to the fold, while also being available to anyone who wanted to talk to him (office hours (8:30 AM to 11:00 PM). He proved to be a very good chaplain, popular with the men and women in the service and highly esteemed by his military superiors, who gave him citations for his "splendid work," his "untiring efforts, zeal and hard work," his "loyalty to authorities and cooperation." Even non-Catholics came to attend his religious services

When World War Two ended in 1945, he was still stationed at Maxwell. His repeated requests for oversea service had been turned down, but being the only Catholic chaplain at that large base kept him extremely busy. In mid 1946 he received his transfer to Germany, where he served for three years in various locations. He earned there a medal for his service in connection with the Berlin Airlift of food and essential supplies when Stalin blocked overland transportation via Russian-dominated territory. As we are speaking here of medals, we may mention that he earned also the World War Two Victory Medal, the medal for Medical Humane Action and two other medals during his years as a chaplain. After a few more years at Air Force bases in the U.S.A. he was assigned to Japan in 1954 for two years, followed by a transfer to a base near San Antonio, TX, as deputy director and instructor at its school for chaplains, ending up in 1958 at Maxwell Air Force University.

That was also the year when Fr. Vernon Gallagher became provincial superior in the U.S.A. Hitherto president of Duquesne University, he faced the problem of finding a successor to deal with the many difficult decisions of that academic institution. His choice fell on Fr. Mac. It would not be easy to pry him loose from the Air Force, where he was highly regarded. Initially much opposed to the idea, the Catholic Deputy of Air Force Chaplains, Msgr. Finnegan, relented when he heard that Fr. Mac would be groomed to become President of Duquesne. Fr. Mac himself, of course, was also consulted and asked whether he would be willing to accept. He pointed out that he did not think himself qualified to deal with all those learned professors, but acquiesced when he was told that the primary function of a university president is not to be a star scholar but an administrator and public relations man, a person who knows how to handle people with empathy, both in the university and outside it. And that was an area in which Fr. Mac excelled.

In this way his career as a chaplain came to an end, though he remained on the reserve list and each year returned for a few weeks to the Air Force until his official retirement with the rank of brigadier general in 1975. After being initiated to his new assignment by Fr. Gallagher he was duly elected Duquesne's President in 1959. He was destined to remain president for twenty-one years, followed by fifteen years as chancellor—a position which at Duquesne is primarily a public relations function. Whole books could be written about his achievements and he figures prominently in the history of the University.

The unrelenting schedule of the presidency took its toll on his health and in 1976 he was granted a sabbatical year to recover, while Fr. Edward L. Murray acted as his substitute during his absence. After his return he was still able to preside over the centennial of Duquesne University in 1978, but being in his sixties he felt that the time was near for someone else to take over as the man at whose desk “the buck stops.” His resignation was accepted in 1979 but he would continue in office until the election of his successor in 1980. The average life expectancy of a university president in office is only seven years, but he had lasted twenty-one years, a record surpassed at Duquesne only by the legendary Fr. Martin Hehir, who served from 1899 till 1931.

Fr. Mac, however, did not leave Duquesne. The Board of Directors elected him chancellor. As such, he continued to render highly appreciated services in the area of public relations and fund drives to his successors in Duquesne's presidency, Fr. Donald S. Nesti till 1987 and Dr. John E. Murray, the first lay president since the founding of the university in 1878. Buildings and endowments, however, are only externally visible trappings that draw attention. Far more important are the ideals that are the soul, the driving force, animating them. Always a priest above all and filled with pastoral concerns, Father embodied them for students and faculty alike and encouraged them to translate them into action for alleviating the less fortunate, thereby doing justice to the university's motto, “It is the Spirit that gives life.”

At 2:00 P.M. on June 10, 1995 he officiated at the wedding of a young couple in the Duquesne's chapel and told them after the ceremony that he hoped to see them again later, “if not in this life, then in Heaven.” He then went to the community room in Trinity Hall. Shortly after, he was found unconscious there. Rushed to nearby Mercy Hospital, he was pronounced dead at 4:30 P.M.

St. Paul's Cathedral was filled for his funeral on June 15. As a final tribute to him Mr. John E. Connelly requested that the College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts for which he had made a gift of eleven million dollars and which was to bear his name instead be dedicated to the memory of Fr. Mac.

For us members of the Congregation, Fr. Harry remains a man who exemplified what it meant to be a Spiritan by his tireless pastoral zeal, his simplicity with the community and his frugal lifestyle. The wardrobe he left behind consisted of a couple of black suits, a few shirts and two pairs of shoes. He faithfully handed in his considerable pension as a brigadier general, his social security and other financial benefits. His religious obedience was so strict and prompt that on occasion the provincial superior complained that it was very difficult to have an informal discussion with him because, as soon as Harry detected even the slightest hint that his superior favored a certain standpoint, he would at once adopt it.

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