

Winter 2001

New Jersey Catholic Records Newsletter, Vol. 20, No.2

New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission

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Recommended Citation

New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission, "New Jersey Catholic Records Newsletter, Vol. 20, No.2" (2001). *New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission newsletters*. 58.
<https://scholarship.shu.edu/njchc/58>



New Jersey Catholic Records Newsletter

VOLUME XX NO. 2

WINTER 2001

Founding Member Monsignor William N. Field Dies

Monsignor William Noé Field died on December 3, 2000, just 19 days short of his 85th birthday. A native of Orange, New Jersey, he attended Seton Hall Preparatory School from 1928 to 1932, and after entered what was then Seton Hall College. After three years on the South Orange campus, he and his fellow aspirants to the priesthood went to Immaculate Conception Seminary, which was then located at Darlington in northern Bergen County. Monsignor Field completed his baccalaureate studies there, and continued through four years of theological study capped by his ordination to the priesthood in 1940.

Monsignor Field's first assignment was at Seton Hall Prep, where he

taught English and religion and served as moderator of student activities. He also taught part-time in the English department of the University. Gradually the University assignments became his full-time job, and, in 1952, he was appointed to the Department of English. He served from 1953 to 1959 as chairman of the department, with additional duties, from 1955 to 1961, as director of development for the University.

In 1961, he became director of off-campus libraries (Newark, Paterson and Jersey City) and, in 1963, director of University Libraries. To prepare for these assignments, Monsignor Field earned an M.A. in English from Columbia University in 1949, a

Master's in Library Science from the same university in 1960, and an M.A. in history with certification in Archival and Museum Management from New York University in 1980.

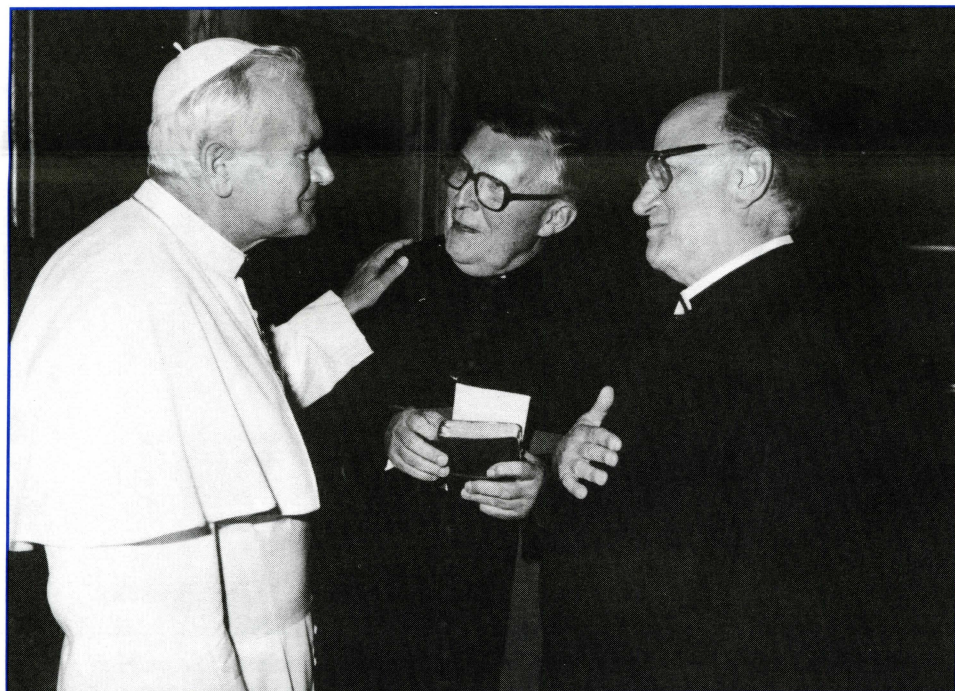
In 1967, without severing his connection with Seton Hall, Monsignor Field became pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Church in Cedar Grove, and, in 1972, was transferred by the Archdiocese to St. Luke's in Ho-ho-kus. The following year the Archdiocese relieved him of his double assignment so he could focus again on building the library and archival collections.

One of Monsignor Field's greatest satisfactions at this period was the success of his long campaign to have the archives of the Archdiocese of Newark deposited, for care and accessibility to researchers, in the archives at Seton Hall. In 1975 and 1976, Monsignor Field's proposal found support from others on campus who were seeking to establish an oral history program, and most importantly, found support from the recently installed archbishop, Most Reverend Peter L. Gerety.

The result of consultations between the archbishop, the other Catholic bishops of New Jersey, and Reverend Thomas G. Fahy, president of the University, was the establishment of the New Jersey Catholic Historical Records Commission (NJCHRC), and the deposit of a significant part of the records of the Archdiocese of Newark in Seton Hall's Special Collections.

Monsignor Field remained an active member of the NJCHRC until his final illness. He served as chair of

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Monsignor Field, center, and his classmate, the late Monsignor Eugene Fanelli, speaking with Pope John Paul II at an audience in Rome.

Monsignor Field

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the archives committee and later of the oral history committee. But he was active far beyond the confines of the commission. He was a board member of the Newark Museum, chaplain of the Serra Club of Essex County, president of the Metropolitan Catholic Library Association, and a member of the editorial board of *The Catholic Advocate*, the weekly newspaper of the Archdiocese of Newark, since its foundation 40 years ago.

In 1986, he was invited to help establish the archives of the North American College in Rome, and he went back every year since then to work on the project. Until his last illness, he was at work on a history of the Archdiocese of Newark to be published in 2003 on the 150th anniversary of the Diocese of Newark.

Monsignor Field was always available for conversation and consultation, in person or by telephone. Former students frequently looked him up, sometimes for advice and sometimes just to reminisce. His wide circle of friends did the same. Those who could not come in person kept his telephone ringing off the hook.

One of his friends for 40 years was Bernard Bush, the first executive director of the New Jersey Historical



Monsignor Field presents a citation to Archbishop Emeritus Peter Leo Gerety on the occasion of the latter's 60th anniversary of ordination. On the left is Most Reverend Dominic A. Marconi, Auxiliary Bishop of Newark and chairman of the commission, and on the right Most Reverend Vincent D. Breen, Bishop of Metuchen.

Commission. In a recent letter, he clearly delineated two of the dominant facets of Monsignor Field's personality and life: "I knew [Field] for 40 years as a man inspired by a beautiful dream: to serve God and humanity by preserving and teaching the history of his Church and its people. Being a practical man as well as a dreamer, he found a way to inspire others and thus transformed his dream into a plan of action and made it come true.

"I also knew Bill Field as a good and gentle man who was passionately

devoted to the idea of understanding and cooperation among people of different religious faiths. I knew that he reached out to me not only as a professional whose collaboration he sought, but also as a Jew whose presence in a Catholic body would, he believed, enrich its work. When he asked me to join the New Jersey Catholic Historical Records Commission, I was honored, and the experience of some 20 years enriched my life immeasurably. For that I will always be grateful to him." *Requiescat in pace.*



Monsignor Field examines one of the displays at the commission's conference on Catholic Higher Education for Women in New Jersey at the College of Saint Elizabeth in April, 2000.



Monsignor Field, flanked by Monsignor Robert Sheeran, president of Seton Hall University, and the late Very Reverend Thomas R. Peterson, O.P., chancellor of the University, vested for the celebration of Monsignor Field's 60th anniversary of ordination Mass.

Information Needed on History of Underground Railroad in New Jersey

As the result of a legislative appropriation, the New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, is beginning a study of the operation of the Underground Railroad (UGRR) in New Jersey. No, not the PATH and not the Newark Subway. This Underground Railroad is the mid-19th century escape route that moved escaped slaves from slave-holding territory through free states to Canada. (Of course you knew that.) There were routes through many states, but the very nature of the operation ensured that it would not build monuments to itself as it operated. Later, a good bit of the information was poorly preserved, or not specifically recorded. Hence the effort now to learn more.

The Historical Commission is trying to identify the routes through the state, the sites where the "passengers" were hidden (the "stations") and the operators (the "conductors" and the "station master").

If you have any information about the Underground Railroad in New Jersey, please contact Edward Wonkeryor at TEL: (609) 292-6062; FAX (609) 633-8168 or e-mail gwright@admin.sos.state.nj.us. The Historical Commission will be most grateful.

Commission Publication Still Available for Purchase

New Jersey Catholicism: An Annotated Bibliography, compiled by commission member Reverend Augustine Curley, O.S.B., is still available at the unbelievably low price of \$15, plus 6 percent New Jersey sales tax and \$1.10 shipping and handling. The paperbound book is 8 1/2 inches by 11 inches, 135 pages. Use the order form below to obtain your copy of the most complete guide available to what has been published about New Jersey Catholicism.

Please send me _____ copy (copies) of *New Jersey Catholicism: An Annotated Bibliography* @ \$15, plus New Jersey sales tax @ \$.45, plus shipping and handling \$1.10.

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The Four Chaplains: A Correction to Last Issue's Article

The previous issue of this newsletter contained proof that one should never engage the gears of the computer while the brain is idling.

In writing of the sinking of the *USAT Dorchester* in the North Atlantic on February 3, 1943, we noted that Reverend "Washington and three Protestant chaplains" passed out life vests to soldiers without them, then handed their own preservers to four young soldiers, linked arms and praying together, were seen by many survivors to go down with the ship.

The mathematics was right but not the descriptors. Father John Washington was the Catholic chaplain. The others were Reverend George L. Fox, Methodist; Reverend Clark V. Poling, Reformed; and Rabbi Alexander D. Goode, Jewish.

The four were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Purple Heart posthumously. In 1951, an interfaith chapel in Philadelphia was dedicated in their honor and, more recently, another in Valley Forge. A major feature of the Meditation Room in the Pentagon is a stained-glass window portraying the Four Chaplains. The U.S. Post Office issued a commemorative stamp in their honor, and, in 1990, Congress awarded them a special Medal of Valor.

Our deepest thanks to those readers who called our attention to the error, especially to Reverend James F. Dolan, S.J., himself a retired Army chaplain.

Commission Remembers Professor Allan Nelson



Professor Allan Nelson and Professor Barbara Bari share views at the testimonial luncheon to Archbishop Emeritus Peter Leo Gerety.

Professor Allan Nelson, a former member of the commission, died early in January as a result of ALS, widely known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. Nelson earned his baccalaureate at Rutgers University, and his master's and doctorate at Fordham University. He taught briefly at Marymount Manhat-

tan College, and then spent 34 years at Caldwell College, retiring in 1997 as professor of history and political science.

Nelson was a popular instructor who taught a variety of courses in both European and American history with his background having prepared him for both areas. His doctoral dissertation focused on English politics in the reign of George III. It was just a short step into examining English Catholicism in that era, and from that to the development of Catholicism in the English colonies along the Atlantic seaboard, and then to Catholicism in New Jersey. He made presentations at meetings of scholars on these topics and published several articles, especially concerning American Catholicism in the colonial era.

For the commission he served on the oral history committee with Monsignor Field.

Published by the New Jersey Catholic Historical Records Commission, Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2687

Most Reverend Dominic A. Marconi, D.D., *Chairman*; Reverend Monsignor Joseph C. Shenrock, P.A., *Vice Chairman*; Barbara Bari; Reverend James F. Betz; Reverend Christopher Ciccarino; JoAnn Cotz; Reverend Augustine Curley, O.S.B.; Reverend Daniel A. Degnan, S.J.; Reverend Michael G. Krull; Reverend Monsignor Raymond J. Kupke; Joseph F. Mahoney; Sister Margherita Marchione, M.P.F.; Elizabeth Milliken; Reverend Monsignor Robert G. Moneta; Sister Irene Marie Richards, O.P.; Sister Thomas Mary Salerno, S.C.; Reverend Monsignor Francis R. Seymour; Reverend Joseph D. Wallace; Peter J. Wosh. Joseph F. Mahoney, *Newsletter Editor*

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