

MEMORIES OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE OLDEST NEWMAN CLUB

The following is a reprint from the Newman Quarterly, summer issue of nineteen twenty-one. Are a primary source of the beginnings of the Newman Apostolate, we thought it deserved a wider reading.

Editors

by TIMOTHY L. HARRINGTON, M. D.

I am asked by the Editor of the NEWMAN QUARTERLY to tell something about the origin and early history of the Newman Club of the University of Pennsylvania. I entered the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania in the fall of 1893 coming from Wisconsin and knowing no one in the old Quaker City. I had taken my collegiate studies at the University of Wisconsin and while there, found both pleasure and profit in attending the bi-weekly meetings of the Melvin Club.

Having profited by membership in the Melvin Club, and finding no organization of Catholic students at the University of Pennsylvania my mind naturally turned to the possibility of forming an organization that would give the Catholic students of this university a chance to come together, to know one another, to discuss subjects of interest to Catholic students and possibly to increase somewhat the opportunities for social life among strangers coming to Philadelphia.

The first meeting called for the purpose of forming an organization, took place in the rooms of two of the Catholic students - Michael O'Brien of the Medical Department and Peter O'Donnell of the Dental Department. At this meeting there were present the following Catholic students.

James J. and Joseph Walsh	Martin S. Gillespie
Michael O'Brien	John H. Gilligan
Peter O'Donnell	Anthony Fleming
Paul B. Dunn	James Murphy
J. D. Riley	John T. McGrath
Gerald Gallagher	John J. Robrecht
Charles O'Brien	Edmond J. Donnegan
John J. Gilbride	T. L. Harrington

and Dr. J. Roberts Bryan, a practicing physician residing at 4200 Chestnut Street, and the Rev. Dr. P. J. Garvey, Rector of St. James' Catholic Church in West Philadelphia, where most of the Catholic students attended Mass.

This meeting took place during the winter of 1893-94, probably in the month of February 1894. At this meeting there was a considerable difference of opinion as to the advisability of forming a Catholic students' organization. The Rev. Dr. Garvey, who proved to be a staunch and valuable friend of the Newman Club when it was formed, was not anxious to have a Catholic organization start and fail. He was not sure that we had the material for making it a success.

After considerable discussion it was decided to proceed with the organization, and the following officers were elected:

President - T. L. Harrington
Vice-President James J. Walsh
Treasurer - John J. Gilbride
Secretary - Joseph Walsh

These officers served during the year 1893-94 and were re-elected for the college year 1894-95. In addition to the names of those mentioned as attending the preliminary organization of the Newman Club the following Catholic students joined during the first year: Archie L. McKinley, Aubrey Higgins. During the second year: Hugh P. McAniff, Louis L. J. Burns and probably others, whose names have disappeared from my memory.

The question of a name for the infant organization

received considerable discussion. It was finally decided that no better name could be found than the name of the great English Cardinal, who found his way to the Church during the stirring days of the Oxford movement. Cardinal Newman might well be the patron of a body of Catholic students struggling to gain a university education. That the name was wisely chosen is amply attested by the large number of Newman Clubs that exist in Universities and Colleges throughout the United States at the present time.

Our first public reception was given to Archbishop Ryan of Philadelphia, a few months after the organization of the club. It was our first thought to make it a small reception, but after consultation with Provost Pepper of the University, we decided to have a reception on a larger scale, and a hall at Fortieth and Ludlow Streets was secured for the evening's entertainment. Provost Pepper introduced the Archbishop and in his remarks paid a tribute to Cardinal Newman and his influence on the thought and religion of his day.

Some of the names of the patronesses of this reception are as follows:

Mrs. Edward deV. Morrell
Mrs. Pierce Archer
Mrs. J. Roberts Bryan
Mr. James Prendergast
Mrs. Edward Gaw Flanigan
Miss Borie
Mrs. Robert Bicknell
Miss Agnes Repplier

In the following fall the club decided to ask Bishop John J. Keane, then Rector of the Catholic University of America and later Archbishop of the Diocese of Dubuque, to deliver a public address to the faculty and students of the University of Pennsylvania. His subject was "Catholic Philosophy" and he delivered a masterful address that was a source of pride to the members of the Newman Club, and a real treat to the non-Catholic guests of the club who were present at the lecture.

It is interesting to know that Bishop Keane was the first Catholic priest to speak in the Chapel of the old University of Pennsylvania, the oldest university in the United States. It is amusing now to remember back to the meeting of the Newman Club at which it was decided to invite Bishop Keane and the discussion arose as to whether or not we should give him an honorarium. After considerable discussion the club decided to offer him all their funds, which amounted to just \$25. When the Bishop reached the city, and after he had delivered his magnificent address, the officers of the club felt that an honorarium of \$25 from the Newman Club would be a meager offering and the officers of the club contributed sufficient money to make the honorarium \$50 instead of \$25.

We settled in those early years of the organization of the club, the question of the right to life of the unborn child, the duty of the physician in case of tubal pregnancy and other equally important and complex ethical problems. That this organization has lived and grown and that its influence has come down to the students of today is added proof that there was a place in the University of Pennsylvania as there is in all great universities, for a Catholic club.