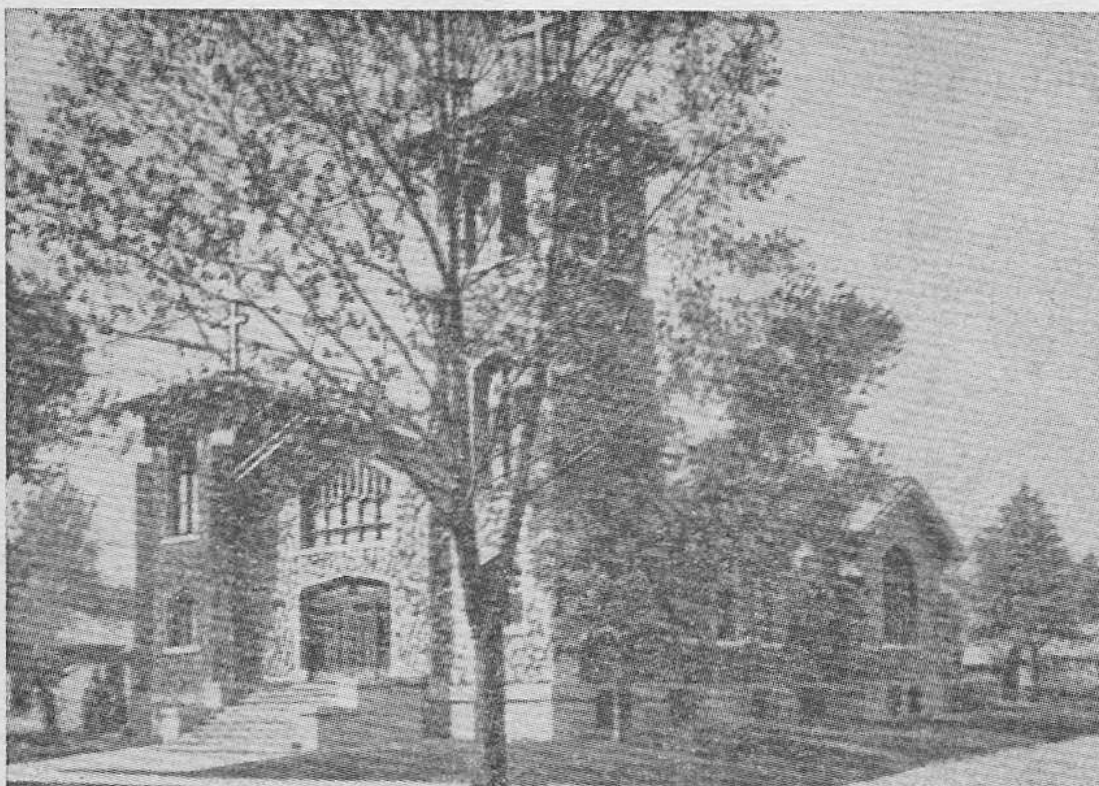


Souvenir
of the
Golden Sacerdotal Jubilee
of
The Rt. Rev. Msgr. A. P. Gallagher, V.F.
Ordained June 19, 1897



Commemorating also the
Golden Jubilee
of
The Rt. Rev. Msgr. A. P. Gallagher, V.F.
as
PASTOR OF ST. AGNES' CHURCH
October 16, 1897
Mena, Arkansas



INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR OF ST. AGNES' CHURCH

JUBILARIAN CELEBRANT

Rt. Rev. Msgr. A. P. Gallagher, V. F.

ASSISTANT PRIEST

Rt. Rev. Msgr. William J. Carroll, V. F.

DEACON OF THE MASS

Rt. Rev. Msgr. James P. Gaffney

SUB DEACON OF THE MASS

Rt. Rev. Msgr. Joseph A. Gallagher

MASTERS OF CEREMONIES

Rt. Rev. Msgr. John J. Healy, V. G.

Very Rev. Msgr. Joseph A. Murray

CHAPLAINS TO HIS EXCELLENCY

The Most Reverend Albert L. Fletcher, D. D.

Rev. George H. Keller

• Rev. John M. Bann

THE BLESSING

His Excellency, the Most Reverend
Albert L. Fletcher, D. D.

TOASTMASTER

Rt. Rev. Msgr. James E. O'Connell
Rector, St. John's Seminary

WELCOME

The Hon. Albert Middleton
Mayor of Mena

"WE OLD TIMERS"

Rt. Rev. Msgr. W. J. Carroll, L. L. D., V. F.
St. Mary's Church, Hot Springs

"YESTERYEARS"

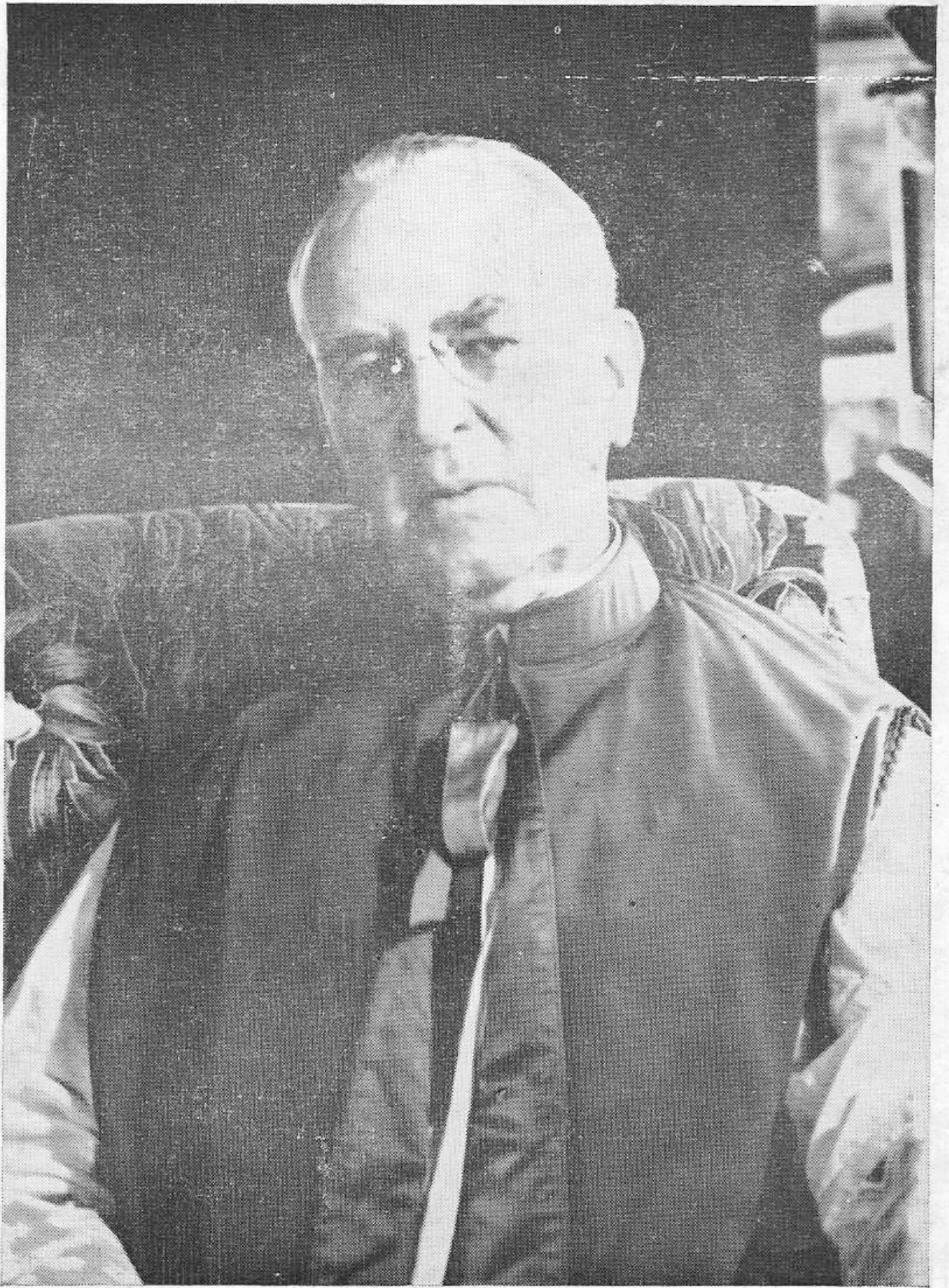
The Honorable Hal Norwood
Ex-Attorney General, Mena

RESPONSE

Rt. Rev. Msgr. A. P. Gallagher, V. F.
"The Old Man" Jubilarian

CONCLUSION

His Excellency, the Most Reverend
Albert Fletcher, D. D.



RT. REV. MSGR. A. P. GALLAGHER, V. F.

Born at Temperanceville, Ohio, March 15, 1871.

Ordained by the Most Rev. Edward Fitzgerald, D. D., in St. Andrew's Cathedral, June 19, 1897.

Appointed pastor of Mena, October 16, 1897.

Sacerdotal Silver Jubilee and Laying of Cornerstone of New Church, June 19, 1922.

Dedication of St. Agnes' New Church, October 16, 1922.

Appointed Private Chamberlain by Rome, November 8, 1924.

Invested Domestic Prelate by the Most Rev. John B. Morris, D. D., October 16, 1940. The Most Rev. Albert L. Fletcher, D. D., preached the sermon.

Celebrated the combined Golden Jubilee of his Ordination and becoming pastor of Mena, October 16, 1947.

Janssen Park founder honored with monument

Michael Reisig

A memorial is soon to be added erected in Janssen Park to commemorate the man that built the park in 1906--Father A.P. Gallagher, of Saint Agnes Catholic Church.

When Mena was less than a month old, the Catholic Church saw the need for religious guidance. Bishop Fitzgerald of Little Rock, and the Rev. Father Enright of Fayetteville, took the new townsite at its word and proceeded to select a site for the church. Father McCormich, a hard-working missionary, came to Mena and proceeded to construct a small frame building 26X40 feet, and a small parsonage. It was a plain box structure made of 12-inch boards. Split bottom chairs served as seats, and people knelt on the floor. The altar was a table. The first services were held on All Saints Day, Nov. 1, 1896.

The bishop soon realized that Mena needed a young pastor with the vitality to meet the demands of clerical life in the pioneer town. The young pastor sent was Father A.P. Gallagher, who had been ordained in June of 1897. When Father Gallagher arrived, he found 10 Catholic families, a very small, plain church, a parish house, and \$1,400 of debt waiting for him. His mission work extended from Ft. Smith to Texarkana, covering 10,000 square miles. He traveled by train, hand cars, mules, or walking.

Janssen Park was established in 1896, when four blocks were set aside for that purpose. In April, 1906, the city appointed Father Gallagher as park com-

missioner. He was given \$300 and a \$20 a month to begin a drive to make the site into a viable park.

Gallagher moved the spring 30 yards northward, added another pond to the one that existed, and added a connecting bridge. A total of \$1,600 was raised, and an entrance to the park from Maple Street was built, which gave access to a new circular drive. (The first automobile in Mena

drive.

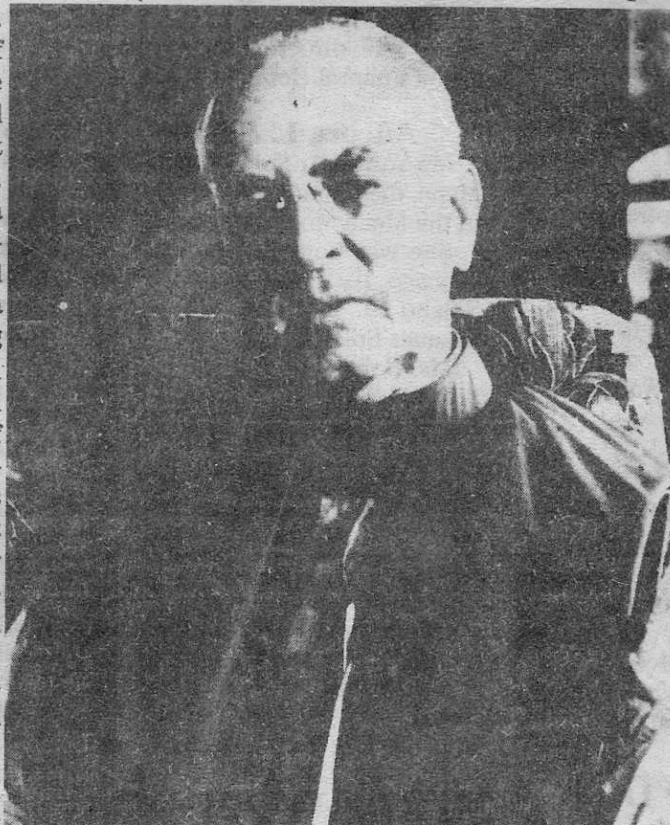
In 1920, the Lochridge Clock was added.

One WWI German Howitzer was added in the 1920s, but it disappeared in a WWII scrap drive in 1942.

Recently added was a memorial to T. Texas Tyler, country music entertainer from Mena.

Father Gallagher went on to accomplish much for the Catholic Church in Mena.

Due to flooding, Father Gallagher decided the original church should be moved to a different location. He wrote the bishop and asked for permission, and it was granted. The spot chosen is where the present church stands. The old church was moved first, then the rectory. An addition was constructed in 1912, but by then, the original church was in ruins. Father Gallagher decided to build a new one. He drew up plans in the form of a cross. A Spanish-style arch-ribbed roof of green clay tile set off the beauty of the natural stone walls.



Father Gallagher

arrived in 1905, and must have been a portend of the future for Gallagher's generation).

The official park opening was in June, 1906, with a large crowd attending. Father Gallagher was presented a gold watch for his endeavors by the appreciative citizens. Gallagher returned \$500 of unspent funds.

In 1914, the Boy/Girl fountain was added.

In 1915, the Mountain Howitzers were added.

In 1916, A greenhouse was erected in the inner circle of the

Two massive towers of unequal height at the entrance were topped with a cross. The stained glass windows and statues were all donated. The new church was paid for by various church members and organizations contributing their hard labor, time and money.

Father Gallagher was elevated to Monsignor in 1924. He was the pastor at Saint Agnes Church for over 50 years. He lived in the same house for those 50 years.

Acknowledgment

The Very Rev. Msgr. Thomas Prendergast, wishing to give a helping hand, is to be complimented for the arrangement, composition and editing of this booklet.

He approved the idea of making it a historical publication of events in the Southwestern District of Arkansas (in that other age, before the automobile and this high flying age), to be told mostly in stories. The tales told are almost unbelievable to those of this modern generation and seem almost like a wild dream even to the Old Man.

Of course I appreciate very much his heavy task and especially his handing me such undeserved bouquets. Although undeserved the bouquets give off an odor that pleases the "Old Man," so much so that he blushes with shame?

THE OLD MAN

FIFTY GOLDEN YEARS Told in Story

Fifty years in the same parish, fifty years in the same house, fifty years of caring for the spiritual needs of fathers and mothers, their children and grandchildren—such is the unique career of the Rt. Rev. Msgr. A. P. Gallagher, pastor of St. Agnes' Church, Mena. On October 16, 1897, he arrived in Mena, a young priest of twenty-six, ordained on June 19 of that year by the late Bishop Fitzgerald in St. Andrew's Cathedral, Little Rock. Today, after half a century in the Lord's vineyard, he is celebrating his golden jubilee in the same parish among the people he loved too well ever to leave.

Many times, during those long years, Monsignor Gallagher might have left Mena for larger places. Thirty-three years ago the late Bishop Morris offered him Hot Springs, which was considered the best parish in the diocese. But he told the good Bishop, as he had before, that he would go willingly if he wanted him to, although he would rather stay in Mena. "I felt you would rather remain," replied the Bishop, "and you may stay in Mena until you ask for a change. Then I will give you the best place I can."

The beloved pastor of St. Agnes' never asked for that change. He was completely satisfied to be with the people of his community, the countless friends, both Catholic and non-Catholic, who have ever been kind and helpful to him. Today, everybody within a radius of forty miles of Mena knows him and his faithful old Ford. If he should have a flat tire along the highways or on country roads, some man, whom he doesn't even recognize, will stop and say: "Father, can I help you?" Then he will insist that the Monsignor rest on a convenient rock by the roadside while he changes the tire.

ANOTHER AGE

Yet fifty years ago, when young Father Gallagher came to Mena, not one in ten people had ever set eyes on a Catholic priest. In fact, there were only twenty-five in the entire Diocese of Little Rock. Unbelievable as it seems, the population of the United States was little more than half of what it is today. It was, indeed, another age, for the condition of the human race has changed more in the last fifty years than it has in any half century since the creation of mankind. Fifty years ago there were no airplanes, no submarines, no atomic bombs. The automobile, electricity, refrigeration were in a rudimentary stage. Mosquito bar was the only window screening. Coal oil lamps provided illumination even in city homes and streets were lighted by gas. Matches were just becoming plentiful. Typewriters were crude affairs. There were no highways, and city streets were paved with wooden blocks and bricks.

Wild beasts, bear and deer and turkey, roamed the Ouachita forests and the unmolested fish were abundant in the mountain streams and lakes. Ammunition was costly in those bygone days, the fly and casting rod unknown, so no game was slaughtered except for necessary meat. The greater part of the population of Polk county was composed of hunters, trappers and moonshiners until the construction of the Kansas City Southern line in 1896. On August 19 of that year, the city of Mena sprang, full-grown, into life with the arrival of a thousand home-seekers by train.

THE START

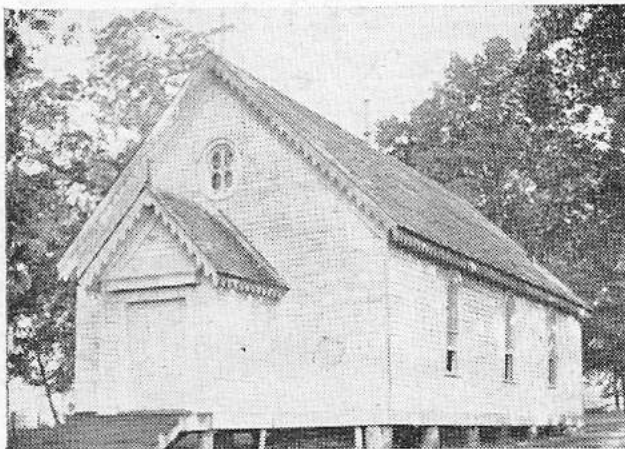
Less than a month later, Bishop Fitzgerald received from the Town-site Company the site for a church and school on North Mena Street. No time was lost by the Bishop in sending a priest, the Rev. P. J. McCormack, a veteran missionary whose headquarters had been at Dardanelle. Work was immediately begun on the church and progressed so rapidly that the first services were held on All Saints Day, Sunday, November 1. No doubt Bishop Fitzgerald realized that Mena needed a young pastor with vitality and enthusiasm to meet the exacting demands of clerical life in a rugged, pioneer community.

Not only the town of Mena but all of Southwest Arkansas came within the parochial boundaries. There were the missions of Huntington and Hartford in Sebastian county, both fifty miles north of Mena; there were six other missions to the south: De Queen, fifty miles; Horatio, eighty miles; White Cliffs, Lockesburg, Foreman and Winthrop with sick calls from the territory one hundred miles to the north and south.

Father Gallagher was the young pastor selected by the Bishop for this rocky portion of the Lord's vineyard. When he arrived on October 16, 1897, he found ten Catholic families, a very small, poorly constructed church and parish house and a fourteen hundred dollar debt awaiting him. With no funds in view, the financial situation was discouraging enough but added to this was another obstacle. The church property was located at the foot of St. John's Hill and to the west and south of it ran a creek which in dry weather was docile enough but after a heavy shower assumed the proportions of a foaming torrent. As soon as the church debt could be paid, Father Gallagher decided to move to a more desirable location on which to build permanently.

A PAL IN THE WILD WEST

A short time after Father Gallagher took over the missions in Southwest Arkansas, Father Ketchum dropped in to see him from his adjoining missions across the border of Indian Territory. A convert to the faith, he claimed to be part Indian. The fact that he rarely wore



HOLY CROSS CHURCH

Foreman, Arkansas

(Built by the State of Arkansas out of hand-dressed lumber after the old Church had been destroyed by the soldiers during the Civil War)



ST. BARBARA'S CHURCH

De Queen, Arkansas

(Built by Father Gallagher and Named in Honor of His Mother)

socks was believed by many to indicate his redskin ancestry but the truth of the matter is that Father Ketchum was too poor to buy socks to wear on week days. He had been a missionary priest for a number of years and could give his young confrere practical advice concerning the work to be done where there were no churches and no conveniences. He always carried a large grip containing the necessary equipment for saying Mass at any place. He told Father Gallagher to provide himself with a like outfit: chalice, altar stone, breads, wine, one vestment of two colors, white on one side, red on the other, and other requirements.

Often the two priests met, sometimes on trains or at junction hotels, and these meetings were not only a chance for an enjoyable chat but an opportunity to go to confession as well. Sitting among the shouting passengers of a crowded train, they would quietly make their confessions. Also at night in hotel bedrooms where they could hear a man snoring in the next room through the flimsy partitions, they would gladly forego sleep to visit and receive absolution.

A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING

One night when Father Gallagher returned home to Mena from his mission at Huntington, he fell over a pair of boots as he was feeling his way to the lamp. He knew then that Father Ketchum was asleep in his bed. The noise roused Father Ketchum and he got up. As Father Gallagher had only one small bed in his three-room cottage, they considered it impolite for one to sleep while the other sat up, so it was their custom to spend the night talking. Sometimes, however, one would find the other sound asleep in the midst of a lively conversation.

"I didn't expect you back until tomorrow," said Father Ketchum sleepily.

"I hadn't planned on coming back so soon," admitted Father Gallagher with a worried look, and he explained that he was afraid he had unwittingly offended the nice Catholic family who gave him his meals in Huntington and always made him feel welcome. When he went to their home for supper Saturday night, the husband met him at the door and told him to go home quickly.

"Is that all he said?" inquired Father Ketchum, who happened to know the family.

"Oh, no," answered Father Gallagher with a mystified air. "It was worse than that. He said his wife was about to start yelling. What could I have done to make her so angry with me?"

Father Ketchum began to laugh. His laughter grew loud and hilarious. Then he said: "When you go back to Huntington next month, you will find the family still friendly and they'll ask you to baptize a new baby." After that, Father Ketchum often told this story in company as a joke on his unsuspecting friend.

During Theodore Roosevelt's Presidency, Father Ketchum was made head of the Catholic Indian Bureau at Washington. On his travels to the Indian missions, if he ever got within one or two hundred miles of Mena, he stopped off for a visit with Father Gallagher. What happy reunions they were! He died suddenly while on one of his trips to the South.

"GO AHEAD; GOD HELP YOU!"

For some time Bishop Fitzgerald hesitated to approve Father Gallagher's courageous plan to move church, rectory and school from

the original site to a new and more desirable location four blocks distant. On the face of it, the task seemed herculean, since a creek and steep hill intervened. Besides, there was the \$1400 debt, but Father Gallagher drafted every resource into service to pay that off before he attempted the move. With the debt paid in full, the new location on the southwest corner of Eighth street and Walnut avenue selected, all that remained was the episcopal nod. Finally that, too, was forthcoming when a postal arrived in the bishop's own hand: "Go ahead; God help you!"

So despite the difficulties, the entire property, including St. Joseph's Academy, was moved to the new location in scarcely a week, during which Father Gallagher continued to say Mass in church. The school, a two-story frame building, was in charge of Sister Bernard of the Mercy Sisters from St. Anne's Convent in Fort Smith. The Sisters had arrived before Father Gallagher early in 1897. The original enrollment was 35 pupils but this increased rapidly after the move to the new site, which occupied the remainder of the block on Eighth and Walnut.

THE A.P.A. IN ACTION

Few, today, remember the A.P.A., an anti-Catholic organization which was in full action when Father Gallagher took over the Mena district. So bitter was the animosity towards a Catholic priest that one day, back in 1905, an A.P.A. conductor refused to allow Father Gallagher to ride the freight train at Horatio, which meant a wait of six hours for the passenger. At the time, Father Gallagher was returning from an overnight mission trip eight miles into the country. A Catholic brakeman, who was a witness of the incident, asked: "Father, did that — conductor refuse to take you?"

"He sure did," answered the weary missionary with a rueful look.

"Never mind, Father," was the prompt reply. "Just hop up on this car of lumber, where it will be pleasant riding and he will not bother you."

About a month later when the general manager of the KCS was in his private car on a side-track in Mena, Father Gallagher went to see him on a business matter. Much to his surprise, the same conductor came to the door while they were talking. "Nothing doing," the manager told him curtly. "We have reinstated you for the last time. Go hunt a job elsewhere." As he went out the man gave Father Gallagher a hard look. Was this just a coincidence?

"THE CHICKEN FANCIER OF MENA"

Life on the Arkansas missions was always eventful and often exciting but Father Gallagher managed to find time for a hobby or two. He is a noted hunter and fisherman; forty years ago he enjoyed raising a fine grade of chickens. In those days chicken shows were held everywhere and at one of the annual shows held in Mena he won first prize with a coop of Black Orpingtons, one cockerel and four pullets. He was offered \$150 for the coop but refused to part with his prize birds.

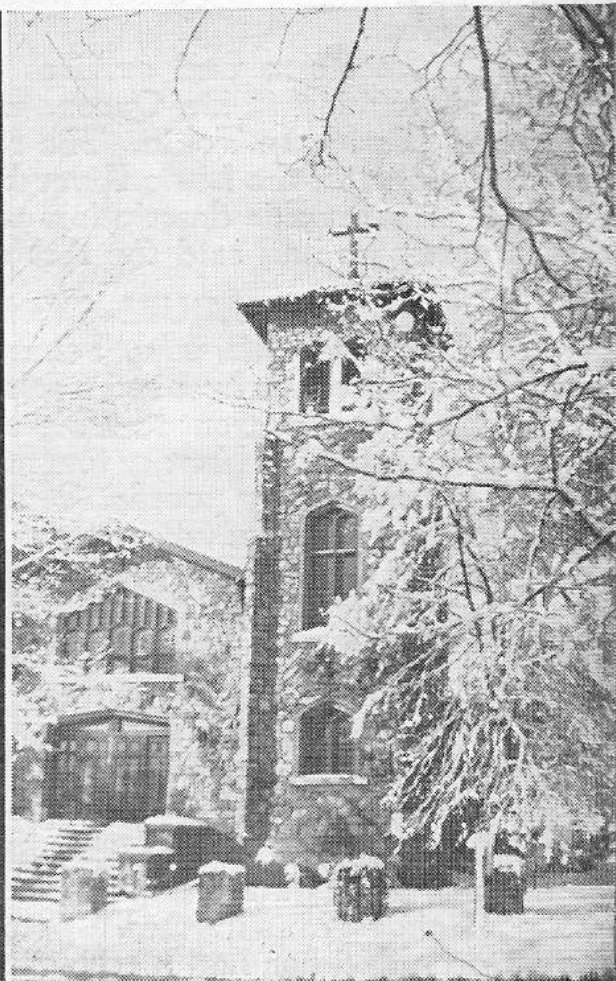
That night, some practical joker put a tag on the coop stating that the chickens were worth \$1,000. Properly impressed, a chicken fancier from Pine Bluff persuaded the owner to let him exhibit the coop at Pine Bluff the following week. There they won second prize in the show and would have taken the grand prize only a feather was broken on the cockerel's wing in transit.

A Little Rock man at the show wired Father Gallagher for permission to take the coop to the Little Rock show the next week, promising to return the chickens safely to Mena. The Arkansas Gazette devoted a special write-up to the now-famous Black Orpingtons in which their clerical owner was referred to as "the chicken fancier of Mena." When Father Gallagher read that he said to himself. "The Bishop will surely see the article. What will he do to me?"

Not long after, Father Gallagher landed at the Bishop's house. There was a general conversation until, all at once, Bishop Morris turned to him and said: "Oh, by the way, Father Gallagher." "Here comes the death warrant," Father said to himself. Then the Bishop continued: "Why didn't you tell me about the chicken show that was held here? I have some fine ones and I believe they would have won a prize." And he went on to say that he wished every priest had a hobby, as then there would be pleasures in their lives as well as hardships.

ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK

There were dangers as well as hardships in those pioneer days. For instance, on a certain late afternoon in August, 1907, Father Gallagher was riding in a buggy on a wild woodland trail through Little River bottoms to a mission at White Cliffs. The driver by his side was an outlaw but that did not account for the look of alarm on the priest's



There is no particular significance in placing these two pictures side by side, except that both are lovely. This is "Miss Mary" Gallagher, beloved sister of Monsignor, who is his housekeeper, and who lives next door.

face. On the contrary, he had the utmost confidence in the man's reliability as a wilderness guide. What did worry him—and the outlaw, too—was a cyclone which was coming directly toward them at a terrific rate of speed. Suddenly the sky grew dark as night, trees began to fall all around the buggy and the rain poured down in torrents.

"Jump out and stand by a tree," yelled the outlaw above the howling of the cyclone. Father Gallagher took his place under a strong hickory, the driver pulled his horse and buggy close to another big tree so that it would not blow over.

When Father Gallagher tells this story he always remarks at this point that he made an Act of Contrition as he never made it before. "I really thought my days were over," he explains. "But I said, God's holy will be done, and then I felt very calm."

The storm passed as quickly as it came but there was no trail left in its wake and the rest of the trip was made around fallen trees. The missionary was completely lost but the outlaw was sure of his way. At last they arrived at the river and found the whole population of White Cliffs gathered there, praying and watching for them. When they saw the buggy and its occupants, they shouted for joy.

Mr. Steiman, manager of the cement plant, a great big powerful German and a devout Catholic, was most solicitous of the missionary, who was drenched to the skin. He provided Father with a complete outfit of his own clothing. The shirt sleeves and trouser legs had to be rolled up, for they were a terrible fit, but to Father Gallagher they seemed perfect.

After the storm and services at White Cliffs, Father Gallagher went to his mission at De Queen, where he held services in the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Tobin. The folks at De Queen had heard about the awful storm in the Little River bottoms. Father Gallagher was able to give them a graphic description of the cyclone and he also told them how earnestly he had said the Act of Contrition.

SEQUEL TO THE STORM

Not long after this, Mrs. Tobin, one of Father's most devout converts, was visiting her husband's relatives at Marysville, Mo. They and many more Catholics went to a big circus that was showing there. While the circus was in full blast a terrific cyclone struck, tearing down the tent and injuring many people. Mrs. Tobin recalled Father Gallagher's experience and in a loud, clear voice recited the Act of Contrition. After the storm had quieted down, one of the listeners remarked: "Just think of us born Catholics not thinking about praying at all, while that convert, Mrs. Tobin, was making her Act of Contrition!"

DE QUEEN MISSION

In 1909 Father Gallagher was called to De Queen to take charge of the body of a Catholic man who had been killed there. At the time several critics of the Church openly remarked that there never would be a Catholic church in that little division town. Only two years later, Father built a beautiful frame church there, which he named St. Barbara's in honor of his mother. It stands today a credit to the Catholics of De Queen and has had a resident pastor for many years. Mrs. John Tobin was always Father Gallagher's valued assistant. Before the church was built, she decorated her home with beautiful flowers and made the little band of worshippers feel welcome to attend Mass there.

In fact, she went out of her way to gather them in, for when Father would arrive in the evening before services, she would take him in her buggy to call upon Catholics who had drifted away from the practice of their religion. In this way the congregation grew until her largest room was filled for services and, finally, the church was built.

OFFICIAL DELEGATE

In 1911 the citizens of Polk county demonstrated their high regard for the pastor of St. Agnes' by choosing him to be their official delegate on an exhibition train to the North and East. "Arkansas on Wheels," as it was known, consisted of three exhibition cars, four Pullmans and three baggage cars. Father Gallagher spoke to the gatherings at various places along the itinerary and on one Sunday he preached and offered prayer in the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky in the presence of some 160 delegates. While in Canton, he spoke at President McKinley's tomb and had the delegation sing McKinley's favorite hymn, "Nearer My God to Thee."

A vote of thanks was extended Father Gallagher on his return to Mena by the Mayor and City Council for his untiring efforts and the great good he accomplished for city and state while in the East on the exhibition train. Copies of this resolution were published in the Mena Star and also in the Guardian, so that the Catholics of Arkansas might know the esteem and confidence the people of Mena have for their worthy pastor, irrespective of creed. The article in the Guardian said in part: "By his activity, energy and enthusiasm in his work he has brought many good and substantial Catholics into this community, thereby increasing the membership of his charge and the citizenship of his state. His efforts have filled his church and given him enough male membership to organize a class of fifty for the Knights of Columbus."

GRAND OLD LADY

Back in 1912, the Louck Hotel at Lockesburg was run by a grand old Southern lady of 80, who was a great favorite with traveling men. Father Gallagher was paying a missionary visit to Lockesburg at that time and when he walked into the hotel for lunch he was met by Mrs.



Bishop Fletcher with "Father" Gallagher visits the mountain streams of his boyhood days near Mena. The other fishermen on the right are F. P. Christian and Art Carrell, both of Mena.

Louck. Taking it for granted that he was a traveling salesman, she asked what he sold.

"Religion," he replied, adding that he was a Catholic priest. The old lady, who was used to being teased by the travelers, scoffed at the idea. However, when Father Gallagher returned from a tour of the country, he found her waiting for him on the front gallery. Someone had told her, meanwhile, that he actually was a priest and she wanted to apologize for having doubted him. She told him that her husband, who had fought in the Civil War, was ever praising the Catholic Sisters for the care they had given him when he was wounded.

Father Gallagher started a little mission at Lockesburg, which was twelve miles east of De Queen, saying Mass at first in private homes and later building a church. He always stayed at the Louck Hotel and Mrs. Louck always had a nice meal waiting for him when he returned from services, regardless of what time it was. She was ever kind to him but declared: "I was born a Baptist, baptized a Baptist and lived and intend to die a Baptist." Father answered: "May God bless and care for you, Mrs. Louck, and grant you eternal life."

NO WOMEN'S TOGS FOR HIM!

Those were days of rough travel and one winter's night when Father Gallagher landed at Winthrop, the temperature was growing very cold. He had supper with Mr. and Mrs. Joe Hunter and then Mr. Hunter hitched up his team to take Father to his mission at Rocky Comfort, twelve miles distant. Mrs. Hunter, a very small but very determined lady, brought out a woolen fascinator and asked Father to put it over his head and ears.

"No, thank you," said the missionary emphatically, as he did not want to be caught with that feminine gear over his head. The little woman asked him a second time and again he refused but as he was leaving the house she said, "Come here; take off your hat," and she reached up and tied the thing over his ears. He said to himself that he would wear it till he got out of her sight and then take it off. In a short while the horses were trotting through the scums of ice and before they arrived at the Bird home, where he was to stay the night, he was forced to admit the fascinator was a life saver.

NEW TRIALS

Fond, happy memories of smiles and kindness! But life cannot always be sunshine and not long after these pleasant happenings, a fresh wave of bigotry and the destruction of the Academy by fire brought new trials to shepherd and flock. On February 3, 1913, the school building was burned to the ground, though fortunately the 150 pupils and the Sisters escaped without injury. Steps were taken immediately for the erection of a better building and generous donations poured in from non-Catholic and Catholic alike. A three-story, light brick building was begun and on January 4, 1914, the cornerstone was laid by Father Gallagher at which ceremony Mother Bernard, first superior of St. Joseph's, and several other Sisters from Fort Smith were present. The solemn dedication of the new building by Bishop Morris took place on April 27 and the formal opening of the academy, to which the public was invited, took place on July 27.

For some time prior to the laying of the cornerstone an anti-Cath-

olic movement, fomented by the "Menace" and anti-Catholic lecturers, swept over the country. Feeling was very bitter in Mena. At the cornerstone exercises the superintendent of the Mena public schools, Prof. E. T. Adams, gave an address in which he commended the high standing of the Academy and the thoroughness of the Sisters' teaching methods. These favorable remarks cost him his position at the next election.

Lies were circulated about priests and nuns and Father Gallagher's picture, which had been hung in the town's Historical Hall with other public benefactors, was stolen. Public buildings were utilized as meeting places for anti-Catholic lecturers. Sidewalks and billboards were filled with insulting sayings about Catholic religion. The Liberator, a libelous sheet published at Magnolia, waged a bitter war against Catholics in Polk county.

The Posey Bill, a disgrace to the state, passed by the Arkansas Legislature of 1914, made it the duty of the sheriff at the request of twenty citizens to inspect private institutions. Mena has the unenviable distinction of being the first place in which this obnoxious statute was put into effect. A delegation of bigots called on Sheriff H. W. Finger and, reluctantly, that officer inspected St. Joseph's. The visit left such a favorable impression of the convent that the sheriff brought his wife next day to pay a social call on the Sisters.

With the entrance of America into World War One in 1917, the clamor of religious animosities was smothered by the call of every American to the support of the country. Of any single occurrence, no doubt, the sacrifice Frank Fried made of his life for his country did most to tie the tongues of anti-Catholic lecturers and to establish the truth of Catholic patriotism in Mena. Frank was the first Mena boy to die in the service. During the funeral hours every store in Mena was closed and the entire countryside came to pay a last tribute. City and county officers were honorary pallbearers. Father Gallagher spoke on "Patriotism, the Love of Country Based on the Love of God."

SILVER JUBILEE AND NEW CHURCH

Like a towering landmark along the way of his fifty years in the priesthood is 1922, when Monsignor Gallagher celebrated his silver jubilee exactly twenty-five years ago on October 16. The joyful occasion was made doubly memorable by the dedication of the beautiful new church of native stone which was the crowning achievement of his career. Bishop Morris dedicated the new St. Agnes' and preached at the Jubilee Solemn High Mass which was celebrated by the jubilarian. The entire congregation received Holy Communion for their beloved pastor at one of the earlier Masses and the jubilee celebration ended with a gala banquet in the Academy auditorium at which Bishop Morris, the clergy, visitors and heads of families of the congregation were present.

CLIMAX OF A CAREER

It is surprising how quickly the years sped by after the twenty-fifth milestone had passed. But they did and, then, almost suddenly it was 1940, and the pastor of Mena awoke one day to find himself famous. The Holy Father in Rome had made him a member of the Papal household, elevated him to the dignity of a Domestic Prelate. He was a Monsignor, a wearer of the purple, and probably the only one throughout Christendom who hailed from so small and out-of-the-way spot as



(Top) All "natives" of Bellaire, Ohio . . . a few of the hundreds of relatives of Monsignor in the Middle Eastern states.

(Bottom) A class of graduates of St. Joseph's, graduated yesteryear . . . the age of curls and beauty.

Mena, Ark. The appointment came about the same time as Bishop Fletcher's consecration as Auxiliary of the Little Rock diocese. Mena being the boyhood home of the new Bishop, Monsignor Gallagher was selected to make a presentation speech at the banquet following the consecration ceremonies in St. Andrew's Cathedral, Little Rock.

"I had not as yet been invested in the purple," reminisced the Monsignor recently, "when I went to Little Rock for the consecration. Three Domestic Prelates escorted me to a room where they had assembled a monsignor's outfit from among their own stock. They told me to dress for the big celebration and my speech. I did so and concluded, while looking in the glass, that I looked very well for a hill billy from the sticks. At the banquet I was placed way down at the end of the long row of high dignitaries and felt quite contented there. But when it came time for me to speak, the cruel toastmaster came and told me that Bishop Morris thought I should speak at the mike where the three leading speakers had.

ON THE SPOT

"I asked for mercy but had to go way up between the Apostolic Delegate and Bishop Fletcher. There stood I, a man who had very seldom been near an archbishop in my life, with archbishops, bishops and abbots all around me and facing more than 300 monsignors and priests. But in a moment I became interested in what I had to say and the mike before me, which I was facing for the first time in my life. So I got through fine like a man of the big cities used to contact with high churchmen.

"After the banquet some of the bishops congratulated me and one told me that he had been a bishop twenty-two years and that if he lived another twenty-two, he never expected to have the honor of addressing so many dignitaries as I had that day. Another bishop after congratulating me asked, 'where is Mena, the place I hear so much about today? I have looked all over the Southern Pacific map and cannot find the place.' I know very well what was on his mind—that I must surely be located at a university of some standing to receive the dignity I had. I told him that I had a little parish in a small town in Western Arkansas. 'How does a place like that rate a Domestic Prelate?' he asked."

HUMILITY ANSWERS

Monsignor Gallagher jokingly replied that he didn't know of any good reason except that Bishop Morris knew a good man when he saw one. But he will tell you candidly and with characteristic humility that he believes the real reason the good Bishop had him appointed a Domestic Prelate was to honor Bishop Fletcher at whose silver jubilee Monsignor Gallagher spoke. And after the death of Bishop Morris when the Auxiliary Bishop became his successor, Monsignor Gallagher was again called upon to speak at his installation.

"And why not?" argues the Monsignor with a twinkle in his eye. "Bishop Fletcher was ever a fisherman and a hunter and it was I who taught him to cast the fly far out into the shadows on the lakes and limpid streams and snare the beautiful bass or the fighting goggle eye." And despite his innate modesty, Monsignor Gallagher is quite confident that he is the best fly fisherman on those limpid streams and lakes. If there is anything he would rather do at this period of his life than raise

and tell others how a raise great big fine seedless tomatoes and beautiful large new varieties of dahlias, it is to fly fish. But he feels hurt because others seem to doubt his success stories.

LANDED THE BIG ONES, BUT—

For instance, he was invited by a Mr. Keeley to fish on the waters south of New Orleans. There the Monsignor and Mr. and Mrs. Keeley pulled in a large number of fighting speckled trout and other game fish. In fact, he caught eight different kinds of game fish in one day. When the Mena Star reported the Monsignor's success in the Gulf Coast waters, it ended the story with a question mark. The Monsignor sent the clipping to Mr. Keeley, pointing out how unkind the Star reporter had been to question his veracity. That act made his reputation as a fisherman bad, indeed, for the New Orleans Item-Tribune printed an article entitled "It Must Be True" which quoted the Monsignor as follows: "It would be better for my reputation had I never gone to New Orleans. When I get to talking about fishing in Louisiana my friends quietly change the subject. Now just to show how folks doubt me, I will tell you about a hunting trip I made recently up here in Arkansas. The dogs were chasing a big swamp rabbit. A covey of quail got up suddenly at my feet. I let go at the birds. One got away. I picked up thirteen"? But notice the New Orleans Tribune put a question mark after the quotation.

WORM TO FLY

About thirty-five years ago Clyde Hackett, a citizen of Oklahoma, now an honorable (?) citizen of Mena, came to Mena with three men to get supplies for a week fishing outing. Hackett watched a man putting something together. He asked a Mena man what the thing was, as he had never, like most folks, seen a fly rod. He received the answer that it was a fly rod and that the owner, a priest, was one of the best fishermen in Polk County. He asked what was the thing he had where the hook should be. He was told that it was a fly with which to catch fish. Hackett declared that no man could catch a fish with that darn thing. When the party returned to Mena with a load of nice fish, Hackett asked the same man if that Priest had caught any fish. He was told that the Priest had returned after about four hours with three strings of fine fish. Hackett said, "I'll be darned. Wait till I tell the folks in Oklahoma. They will say, 'Hackett, you are telling some more of your —— lies'."

HAPPY MEMORIES

For some thirty-eight years Monsignor Gallagher has been taking his vacations in winter instead of summer, going for two weeks to the Gulf Coast marsh country to hunt ducks. In 1910, he recalls, one could see millions of ducks and geese in the marshes and rice fields. In this year of jubilee one of the many hunters he used to roam the marshes with was on his way North and stopped in to see the "Old Man", as he refers to himself. Those were happy days again, talking about good times in the South. He asked the Monsignor if he remembered when eight good pals went to a certain ranch and after the evening hunt all got together in a camp house, had supper, washed the dishes and started playing poker. One of the party bought Father a pile of chips and while a pot of coffee was kept boiling on the stove "a good time was had by all." The visitor inquired: "Do you remember when about 2

a. m. you said to the gang: 'What if the Bishop could see me now? What would he do to me?'

MORTGAGE PAID

Among the most satisfactory incidents of recent years was the payment in full of the church mortgage, which was accomplished in 1943. For years St. Agnes' has been one of the show places of that section as well as serving as a model for other structures, since it was the first church to be built of native boulder stone. Its total cost is estimated in excess of \$40,000.

READ HIS OWN OBITUARY

Twice during his priestly career Monsignor Gallagher has been gravely ill, so gravely that the first time he was reported dead and an eastern newspaper actually printed a highly-complimentary obituary. Again in the fall of 1945, the Monsignor's life was despaired of. Good priests and holy nuns prayed for him. The school Sisters had Protestant as well as Catholic children praying earnestly from their hearts that were filled with love for him. It must have been those kind, sincere prayers that made the Good God send him back home again. After he returned but still under the care of Mrs. Mary Brugnone, letters of sympathy kept piling up. He asked her how the folks all over the United States knew he was so sick. She answered: "How do they know it all over the world? You are receiving letters from Europe and the Pacific Islands." Relatives had written their sons and daughters at war in those countries, so those good boys and girls were sending letters of sympathy. "It makes a person feel good all over to have such friends," the Monsignor says, "friends who do not forget."

BLESSINGS FROM GOD

Good friends, kind friends—these are the blessings from God which have filled Monsignor's life with happiness. He has served under three grand, good Bishops and not only have they been kind to him but also his brother priests and the Sisters, especially the good Mercy nuns. His faithful sheep both old and young, and kind non-Catholics have done their share, as well. He could tell stories that would fill a great and interesting volume, stories of when he worked hardest and God always seemed the more surely with him; when he needed money or help and those needs would be supplied in mysterious ways. Some people might say that the supply was just a coincidence. But a coincidence in a thousand cases and whenever there was a necessity? Oh no, the Monsignor is certain that could not be and feels that whenever he needed help in God's work it was surely supplied.

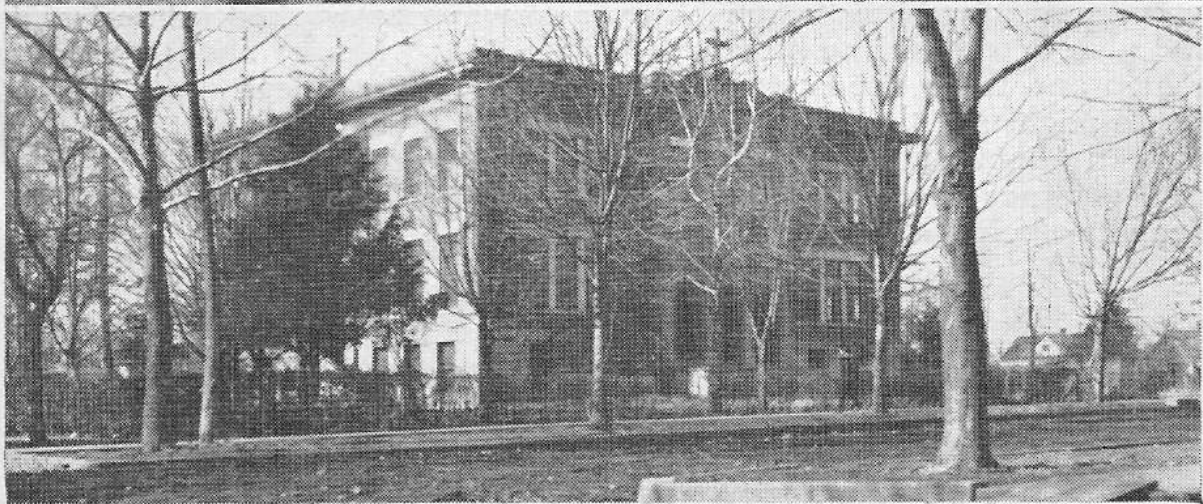
TRUE HAPPINESS

"The happiness Monsignor Gallagher has found," said an editorial in the Arkansas Gazette at the time of his investiture as a Domestic Prelate "fulfills the finest and best conceptions of true and rewarding happiness. It is not surprising when you read his record that he has received many offers of larger pastorates. He has not only been a builder in his own church field in Mena and a big region around it, but he has helped to build Mena itself. One reason he has stayed there is told in his own words: 'I am living among some of the best people on earth and I expect to spend the rest of my life here.'"

THE FLETCHER FAMILY

The story of Monsignor Gallagher's fifty years in Mena would not be complete without his recollections of our revered Bishop, the Most Rev. Albert L. Fletcher. "The Fletcher family moved to Mena at a time when the four children were quite young," recalled the Monsignor. "Doctor Fletcher practiced medicine here quite a while before he died. He was one of the old time, real family doctors and carried in his hand bag just about all the medicine folks needed. What's more, he cured them. Take the case of Silvie Meyers. The Doctor told me I had better annoint the lad as he was near death. He said he wanted to give Silvie a very severe treatment which would perhaps save him. He brought Silvie down to skin and bones but today, after many years, the boy still lives.

"Old ladies and other folks, too, would call the Doctor in, thinking they were about to die. The Doctor believed that all they needed



This group of "old timers" pictured with Monsignor Gallagher were one time or another all members of St. Joseph's Academy faculty. The Academy is shown at the bottom.

was to drink more water, so he would load capsules with salt and order them to be sure to take them at regular hours. Patients thought he was giving them special, wonderful medicine. In a few days Doc would drop in to see his patient and find the patient well and happy, feeling that Doctor Fletcher was the most wonderful physician, a family doctor in all truth. I was a very sick man at one time from acute indigestion. At night four men came to sit up with me and after the doctor had finished his rounds about ten p. m., he came in and told the men to get a cot and place it near my bed and go home. He cared for me and slept but little during that long night. I am still at the old stand.

FOUR CHILDREN

“The good Doctor loved to care for the sick but hated to collect. The four children were in school and this was expensive. Mrs. Fletcher, the good mother ever, was at times hard pressed to make ends meet. The Doctor would then get down to the task he hated and send out a few bills. Albert, the oldest of the children, is now our great Bishop. George, a fine lad, died in Rome where he was sent to study for the priesthood. Philip was drowned in the river trying to save the life of another boy. Marie, the darling of the whole family, after growing to maturity was taken by death also, leaving a husband and small children.



Father Gallagher calls this his “private car” on one of the “branch lines.” He is shown setting off for a distant mission.

PROPHETIC WORDS

“When we heard that Father Fletcher was made Vicar General of the diocese, the Doctor came moseying around to see me as he often did when he wanted to talk about his boys. I let him talk, waiting until he came to the subject of the new Vicar General. When he did, I told him that Albert would some day be a Bishop. ‘Do you think so?’ he asked. I said that I surely did, since he was being advanced very fast by Bishop Morris and other bishops loved him as did all the priests of the diocese. He started on his way out but stopped, turned to me and said: ‘You feel that he will be a Bishop some day?’ I said again: ‘I surely do.’ I am certain that good man walked away feeling sure that his boy would become a Bishop, as I did, and I am glad he felt so before he died.

FLETCHER THE FISHERMAN

“Fishermen are always lovable characters and if you could see that good man since he became Bishop, standing up in my boat and casting the fly you would love him. He once stated at a big celebration in the presence of Bishop Morris: ‘Mena is the only place where I can slip off from my Bishop and have a good time.’ We have had many a happy day together. Bishop Morris, who was ever kind to me, said just a short time before he died: ‘I always did enjoy going to Mena. I wish that I were able to go there for a while now but I fear I shall never see Mena and the good folks there again.’ He never did. So it is happy I am that we still have a Bishop who loves Mena and the best little congregation on earth.

“Please keep this booklet and when you come across it, remember the Old Man in a little prayer.”



This is the palatial residence where the “Old Man” has lived for fifty years. Bishop Fletcher and his brother George helped to build the addition when they were boys in Mena. It was made warm and cozy (for the first time) in the fall of 1946.