

Brother Columba, Humble Cobbler:
An Historical and Theological Perspective

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FOREWORD

A strange light seems to come into John O'Neill's eyes, and a strange feeling of peace flooded his soul. Could it be that it was to Notre Dame God was calling him? Would he, with his misshapen feet be admitted into the Brotherhood that had produced these wonderful men?¹

I showcase this quotation from Brother Ernest Ryan's 1948 book *These Two Hearts* for at least two reasons. Firstly, Brother Ryan's hagiography of Brother Columba O'Neill had been, for many years, all that was available to our community for the purposes of remembering this holy man. In fact, Columba would have preferred total anonymity to the attention he will be receiving not only in this paper but also as we pray for the swift advancement of his cause. Secondly, and most importantly for the purposes of this paper, Ryan's words establish the *mise en scène* for what will be my treatment of the humility with which an unlearned Columba "with his misshapen feet" would follow the Lord's call to Notre Dame, remain faithful to his vocation as a Holy Cross Brother, and become a source of healing for thousands through his devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Not only did the students at the University of Notre Dame benefit from Columba's efforts in encouraging more frequent Confession and reception of Holy Communion (which caused grumbling among some priests because they had to celebrate more Masses and hear more confessions); but the rest of the world, too, would profit from the countless novenas to "Two Hearts"—Jesus's Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Christ's Mother—offered by Brother Columba for the healing of such maladies as blindness, deafness, and epilepsy.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pray for Us!

Sacred Heart of Jesus, Have Mercy on Us!

In kind love,

Edwin

¹ Brother Ernest Ryan, C.S.C., *These Two Hearts: A Story of Brother Columba O'Neill, C.S.C.* (Notre Dame, IN: Dujarie Press, 1948) p. 12.

INTRODUCTION

These Two Hearts Revisited

Purview and Purpose of this Paper

The hagiographical sketch of Brother Columba O'Neill in Brother Ernest Ryan's 1948 book *These Two Hearts* offers the reader an historical and theological perspective on Columba's life that is largely anecdotal. Similarly, in 2011, Father John VandenBossche, CSC, offered a paper on Brother Columba at the Holy Cross History Conference that, in addition to being briefer, seems equally inadequate with respect to the author's scholarly prowess.² Namely, it seems that much of Father VandenBossche's work was informed by conversations with contemporaries of Brother Columba or from Brother Ryan's book—that is, if VandenBossche ever read it, which, on account of discrepancies in chronology, seems unlikely.

Insofar as it was neither Brother Ryan's nor Father VandenBossche's intent to produce a scholarly *vita* or well-researched theological treatment of the life of our saintly cobbler, I revisit Brother Ryan's text not only with an eye to what is lacking but also with a deep appreciation of what *These Two Hearts* offers: a definitive and pious account of Columba's love of the two greatest of human hearts, those of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Thus, careful attention to Columba's "devotion to the Blessed Virgin and her Immaculate Heart, and his even greater love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus"³ will undergird the coming analysis of Columba's life, works, ministry, and correspondence—particularly his correspondence with the Rev. George Giglinger (1886-1957), who was pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Keokuk, Iowa.⁴

² Rev. John VandenBossche, "Brother Columba, C.S.C." (July 2011).

³ Bro. Philip Smith, "Do We Have Another Saint? Brother Columba O'Neill, C.S.C. (1848-1923)" (24 April 2021), 2.

⁴ Cf. "Archbishop Dedicates New St. Mary's Church" in *The Daily Gate City* (12 February 1912). St. Mary's has been subsumed into a grouping of churches now [2022] called Church of All Saints.

A thoroughly researched historical-theological treatment of the life of Brother Columba was not possible in the past because efforts to promote the cobbler's cause for canonization had been suppressed.⁵ This suppression was ostensibly for monetary reasons, as indicated in a 1954 letter from Very Rev. Superior General Christopher O'Toole, CSC, (1906-1986) to Brother Sabinas Herbert, CSC, (1917-1955), who was in charge of the Sacred Heart Apostolate from 1953 until his death two years later. In this letter, O'Toole responded unfavorably to Sabinas's request to "reviv[e] the memory of Brother Columba," encourage a more widespread devotion to the Sacred Heart through Columba's intercession, and promote Columba's cause for canonization.⁶ To these petitions, the superior general responded, "Whatever you can do to encourage devotion to the Sacred Heart is very fine indeed. [...] Once we have Moreau and Andre done [i.e., beatified and canonized], we can add Brother Columba."⁷ With no immediate action taken to promote Columba's cause, gradually the humble cobbler's renown would peter out and remain hidden in the mind of God.

During Columba's lifetime, however, and especially during his years at Notre Dame where his shoe-shop-shrine to the Sacred Heart was located, the cobbler's renown was no secret. Columba brought "national publicity"⁸ not only to Notre Dame—where he revitalized the faith of over nine-hundred students and countless visitors—but also among his confrères in Holy Cross. One such admirer of Columba was Notre Dame's 11th president and one of the cobbler's provincial superiors, the Rev. Charles O'Donnell, CSC, (1884-1934) who preached the following words at Columba's funeral Mass:

⁵ A South Bend *Tribune* article (5 November 1934) says that there are "steps taken toward canonization of Brother [Columba]," though there is no extant evidence to suggest that any "steps toward canonization" were taken by anyone in the Congregation of Holy Cross.

⁶ Letter from Sabinas to O'Toole (14 April 1954).

⁷ Letter from O'Toole to Sabinas (15 May 1954).

⁸ Marie Lauck, "Booting Leather at Notre Dame" in *Extension Magazine* (November 1947).

His superiors assigned him to the shoe shop...[A]nd there he remained and worked till in the course of time and the providence of God the cobbler's shop itself became a shrine. The humble shoemaker had somehow learned to mend immortal souls. [...] The Blessed Virgin and the Sacred Heart were never separated in his own devotion.⁹

Father O'Donnell also remarked at how news of Columba's decline and eventual death attracted countless souls to visit him on his death bed:

[H]is name was known by thousands, many of whom came in the course of a year to visit him; the notice of his death is carried by the public press throughout the land. [...] For the past two days the faithful in a constant stream have approached his bier and touched their rosaries and medals to his hands, or stood in rapt devotion, looking at his plane and peaceful face.¹⁰

Because so many souls had flocked to Sacred Heart Church for Brother Columba's funeral, Brother Ernest records that

an exception was made to a Community custom. The casket was opened again [after the funeral procession] so that scores who had not been able to see their beloved friend could...touch their rosaries and medals to his tired hands...[as relics] to treasure. [...] From his place above, close to the Hearts he loved so well, he smiles down upon us still. May we imitate his example. May we draw ever nearer with Joseph and Mary to the ever-loving heart of Jesus.¹¹

After Brother Columba's funeral in 1923, the community retained the cobbler's tools, a cloth that touched his remains,¹² and his correspondence¹³ as relics of a man known to be a living saint.

Another of Columba's exemplary friends and followers was the above-mentioned Father Giglinger, who heeded Brother Ernest's call to imitate Columba's example and faithfully devote

⁹ Rev. Charles O'Donnell, CSC. Circular Letter of the Reverend Provincial. (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 22 November 1923).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ryan, op. cit., 55.

¹² The cloth is housed in the archives and is approximately 35 inches wide and 75 inches long. It is satin and a very faded red. On each end there is a small swath that has been cut away.

¹³ Cf. *Midwest News Notes* 13(4) (18 January 1980): these were "letters from people all over the world asking for [Columba's] assistance in their illnesses and difficulties."

oneself to the "Two Hearts" of Jesus and Mary. Sometime soon after Columba's death, Giglinger returned to Brother Ernest Ryan sixty-seven letters penned by Brother Columba to the Iowan priest.¹⁴ These letters utilize simple English prose, express words of encouragement to the parish priest,¹⁵ ensure mutual prayers, request updates on Columba's sister Eliza¹⁶ (who was one of Giglinger's parishioners in Keokuk), and attest to hundreds of cures. There are also twenty-five extant letters—twenty-three to Columba and two to Brother Ernest—written by Giglinger and are especially important for our growing understanding of Brother Columba. These letters are particularly significant for the following four reasons:

1. Giglinger is definitive in his estimation that Columba is a saint;
2. He writes about cures and favors that were received by members of the parish and among the members of his family in Germany;¹⁷
3. He often mentions that he has heard about a "cure" through someone other than Columba; and
4. In his lengthy letter to Brother Ernest, he agrees heartedly with Ernest that Columba should be canonized. (Recall that Sabinas wanted this to happen, yet O'Toole said that the money was committed to Moreau and Bessette.)

A detailed analysis of Giglinger's letters to Columba and Ernest will follow the coming historical sketch of Columba's humble beginnings, travels as an itinerant cobbler, and eventual coming to the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1874. An emphasis on his healing ministry and conclusive evidence of his sanctity will be central to my analysis of Giglinger's letters. It is my hope, therefore, that my present historical and theological research—which is now possible because thousands of items have come to light since 2020, after a period of gradual suppression—might

¹⁴ These letters are presently housed in the Midwest Province Archives.

¹⁵ Columba concludes each letter with "Kind Love..."; and in the postscript of one letter he adds, "What ever [sic.] you do it will be all right."

¹⁶ Eliza was a nickname for Elizabeth. For the sake of continuity, she is called Eliza *sic passim*.

¹⁷ Giglinger was born in Bavaria and came to Davenport, IA, in 1891.

not only inspire further inquiry into this holy man's life but also direct the reader's heart toward those higher mysteries and the "Two Hearts" for which Brother Columba lived his life of sanctity.

PART ONE

From PA to ND: A Biographical Sketch of Brother Columba (John) O'Neill, CSC¹⁸

Early Years (1848-1862)

On 5 November 1848, John O'Neill was born in Mackeysburg,¹⁹ Pennsylvania, to parents Michael and Ellen (McGuire)²⁰ with a congenital foot abnormality.²¹ The child was baptized *sub conditione* just two days later, on 7 November, because it was not expected that he will live.²² To the surprise of the O'Neill family and their intimates, John lived seventy-five years—a life marked by humility and a healing sanctity.

Immigrants to the United States from the Irish city of Kilkenny, Michael and Ellen had a total of six children: Patrick being the first-born; the next being Eliza; then James and Terry being the third- and fourth-borns, respectively; John being the fifth, followed by the baby of the family, Dennis. Though unlearned, Michael and Ellen were faithful Catholics and raised their children in the faith. Seeing that Mackeysburg was an epicenter for quarrying at the time,²³ Michael seized the opportunity to learn and instruct his sons in the business of mining for coal.

¹⁸ I derive my chronology from the following paper made available to me by Brother Philip R. Smith, CSC, of the Midwest Province of Holy Cross Archives (hereafter MWPA): Smith, "Do We Have Another Saint?". This paper by Smith contains a "Definitive Chronology," which has been updated and revised by Smith as of 24 March 2022.

¹⁹ An alternate spelling of O'Neill's birthplace is "McKeansburg," which is the present spelling offered by the United States Census Bureau as of 2022. In keeping with O'Neill's birth records, I will use the spelling "Mackeysburg" *sic passim*.

²⁰ Cf. the South Bend *Tribune* (November 1923) for an alternate spelling of O'Neill's mother's name, "McQuire."

²¹ This condition was likely a clubfoot. Cf. Lauck, "Booting Leather at Notre Dame," qtd. above.

²² John's baptismal certificate includes godparents Michael Purcell and Jane Murphy, and minister M. Maloney.

²³ The PA mining industry, a successful enterprise since the late 18th century, would decline throughout the 1940s after the Second World War.

The men of the O'Neill household were expected to work in the coal mines with their father, who was, in John's words, "as strict as the blazes" and was wont to whip his children "for every little thing."²⁴ John was especially close to his mother during his early years, for John "had fallen entirely" into her care when "Michael O'Neill was swinging his pick into the black bowels of the earth hundreds of feet below the ground."²⁵ John's long-suffering mother spent "hours with [John] every day" teaching the child to walk, which was especially difficult on account of the child's odd feet.²⁶ Nonetheless, John—who eventually developed a "fairly graceful"²⁷ gait—was determined to be like the other men in the family and work in the coal mines, even if doing so meant denying the real pain that such work would cause him. Would young John ever join his father and brothers in the mines?

As a youth John suffered countless humiliations (especially from his austere father), and throughout his life he grew friendly with suffering and rejection. Not only was John humiliated at home and at school on account of his unhandsome countenance and evident frailty; he was also unable to wield the pickaxe, which was a symbol of manhood among blue-collar families in 19th-century Pennsylvanian mining towns. Being unable to bear proudly this staff of manliness was a source of great shame and a cause for further humiliation for young John. Setting aside the pickaxe, John attempted to handpick slate from coal to bring home a meager week's wages of \$1.50,²⁸ but he was unable even to perform this task. Thus, John's malformed foot and poor health ultimately excluded John from the ranks of the miners of Mackeysburg.

²⁴ VandenBossche, "Columba," 1

²⁵ Ryan, *op. cit.*, 3

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ VandenBossche, "Columba," 1; cf. also VandenBossche, "On the Sacred Heart of Jesus" (July 2010)

Discovering a Vocation (1862-1876)

When John was fourteen years of age and it was well established that he is unfit to work in the mines, Michael and Ellen were at a loss as to how their fifth child might best use his gifts. Though it was clear that John was determined, witty, faithful, and humble from a young age, it remained unclear how an unlearned man of less than average means could make a living in a mining town if not by the very work sustaining the local economy. Interestingly, however, John developed an interest in shoemaking and desired to place himself under the tutelage of the village cobbler. The humility with which John, "a real foot-sufferer,"²⁹ admitted his unfitness for the mines allowed one door to close, that God might lead him through others.

As a shoemaker's apprentice throughout the 1860s,³⁰ John's personal struggles met and were shaken by the strife of his homeland. Five days before Christmas in the year 1860, America experienced the succession of South Carolina from the Union, followed by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas.³¹ With the leadup to the Civil War and its ultimate ensuing with the Battle of Fort Sumter on 12 April 1861, Abraham Lincoln was the newly inaugurated sixteenth president of the United States and firmly opposed the Confederacy. Though "news traveled slowly in those days,"³² word of bloodshed and a call to arms soon reached the O'Neills' small mining town. The miners of Mackeysburg were quick to supply troops for battle, and this put pressure on the village cobbler and his apprentice, young John O'Neill, to produce an abundance of "strong new shoes."³³ Amid the trials of his country, his town, and the ultimate closing of the village cobbler's shop, John O'Neill—hardly fourteen years

²⁹ Ryan, op. cit., 6

³⁰ *Notre Dame Daily* vol. 2, no. 35 (22 November, 1923)

³¹ *Ibid.*, 8

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 9

of age—"felt a special call to serve God in the religious state."³⁴ This sense of a calling to the religious life deepened in John as he labored throughout his teenage years and early twenties. For the fourteen years following the closing of the shoe shop (c. 1860), John set off—cobbler tools in hand—on a great journey in which to discern where God might be leading him.

John spent the early days of his peregrinations working for parishes, where he remained for as long as his services were needed. This new itinerant ministry of John's—which was undoubtedly a cause for further suffering on account of his foot condition—proved rather successful. The demand for itinerant cobblers was high in the days of a sparsely settled America, wherein the nearest neighbor might have been several miles away. John's business at local parishes also provided the young cobbler with a much-desired occasion for private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.³⁵

Circa 1869, at about twenty years of age,³⁶ John wandered—"guided, he believed, by the direction of the Blessed Virgin"³⁷—out of Pennsylvania and into the west. John partnered with shoemaker Ted Mangan and set off for Denver, Colorado; yet before they arrived, they stopped for a few-days' respite in St. Louis, Missouri. After John rested his crippled feet, he and Ted trekked on to Colorado, where they finally arrived and soon after parted ways. John had a fruitful career in Denver, where he attended the 6am daily Mass prior to work. Reflecting on his Rocky Mountain days, O'Neill said the following: "in those days, one who [went to Mass everyday] was

³⁴ The South Bend *Tribune* (No. 20, 1923) in the *Extracts* of Brother Aidan O'Reilly, C.S.C. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Archives, 1951).

³⁵ Cf. Ryan, *op. cit.*, 9.

³⁶ Cf. VandenBossche, "Columba," 1. There are no known extant records of the exact date when O'Neill began his westward journey. However, since it is unlikely that John would have made the entire journey across the continent without the aid of some form of transportation, VandenBossche's dating John's departure at "his twentieth year" agrees with the opening of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869. Thus, I would hesitate to date John's westward journey any sooner than 1869.

³⁷ *Associate of St. Joseph* (April 1941) in Aidan's *Extracts*

counted very pious. I was the only layman that you could find in the church."³⁸ Although rare for an individual to receive frequent—let alone daily—Communion in the 1860s, for John this was a vital part of his day; and on Sundays, when resting from a long week's work, the young cobbler sat for hours praying in the church until his eyes grew heavy.

After his stay in Denver, John set off for America's western limits and arrived in California between the years 1870 and 1873.³⁹ In *These Two Hearts*, Brother Ernest Ryan writes that this leg of O'Neill's journey "was made on foot...alone,"⁴⁰ and Father VandenBossche adds that, "on the way to San Francisco, [John] stopped...here and there to cover his travel expenses, by practicing his trade."⁴¹ While in California John applied to another religious community,⁴² but he was not admitted to the order on account of his foot condition. Yet, just as John was rejected from the ranks of the miners of Mackeysburg and was not deterred, so too was he not discouraged by this more recent rejection.

Remaining confident in the call he had heard since his fourteenth year, John recalled learning of the Congregation of Holy Cross from another itinerant cobbler, Johnnie O'Brien, who encountered Holy Cross during his time as an apprentice in the shoemaker shop of the Manual Labor School at Notre Dame. The stories John had heard from O'Brien about Notre Dame's working brothers⁴³ teaching "blacksmithing, tailoring, carpentering and many other trades"⁴⁴ led

³⁸ VandenBossche, "Columba," 1

³⁹ Cf. South Bend *Tribune* (20 November 1923).

⁴⁰ Ryan, op. cit., 10

⁴¹ VandenBossche, "Columba," 1

⁴² Cf. Smith, "Brother Columba (John) O'Neill, CSC (1848-1923) Essential Dates" (Notre Dame, IN: Midwest Province Archives, 2021). Cf. also VandenBossche, op cit.

⁴³ On working brothers, cf. Smith, "'Working Brothers' Were the Salt of Community Life" *Brothers of Holy Cross: Newsletter of the Midwest Province of Brothers of Holy Cross* (Fall, 2021); and Rev. Charles O'Donnell, CSC, "Circular Letter" (22 November 1923).

⁴⁴ Ryan, op. cit., 11

John to consider that perhaps his vocation might involve joining this "great band of men."⁴⁵ At around the time of Michael O'Neill's death in Mackeysburg in 1873, John grew "dissatisfied"⁴⁶ with the Sunshine State and wrote to the novice master at Notre Dame, Father Augustin Louage, CSC, (1829-1894)⁴⁷ "to find out if [Holy Cross] was the community he had been seeking for such a long time."⁴⁸

First Assignment (1876-1885)

After meeting with Father Louage and Father Edward Sorin (1814-1893), John O'Neill joined the Congregation of Holy Cross on 9 July 1874. On 8 September of that same year, John entered the novitiate on the grounds of the University of Notre Dame—where John first donned the religious brothers' habit and took the name Columba. The following words of Father O'Donnell suggest that Ireland's Saint Columba (521-597), founder of Iona Abbey, carried an especial significance for the fledgling Holy Cross Brother because of his humble beginnings and the faith of his Irish ancestors:

A club-footed child, the son of poor parents, he received scant schooling, working at an early age in the coal mines of Pennsylvania. The doors of opportunity were closed to him, all but one. His parents at the outset of his career, could give him only one key, but it was the key to the kingdom of heaven; it was the faith that St. Patrick brought to Ireland, and St. Columba nourished, and that thousands of the Irish race kept when all else was lost. And with that inheritance the young lad in the coal mines of Pennsylvania was rich. Whatever his social or physical disabilities,

⁴⁵ *Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross*, 1.3

⁴⁶ VandenBossche, op. cit., 1

⁴⁷ Ordained in France as a diocesan priest in 1853, Louage joined Holy Cross in 1871 after meeting Father Lemonier, CSC, in America. He professed final vows in 1873 and was immediately recognized as the most capable man for directing novices. Thus, he became novice master in 1874. In 1880, Louage was elected as Provincial of Canada. Becoming enamored with the mission of Bengal during his time as provincial, he went there at the end of his term and in 1891 was appointed its first bishop by Pope Leo XIII. He died from malaria in 1894.

⁴⁸ VandenBossche, op. cit., 1

he could move along the best of the ages, and his crippled feet need not stumble on the road to heaven.⁴⁹

The perseverance that allowed the Irish saint to lead countless Irish men and women to Christ became a model for Brother Columba's religious life. With the strength of the faith of his ancestors, Brother Columba—who was, as evinced by O'Donnell's eulogy, a miraculous man cut from an apparently un-miraculous cloth—would lead thousands of individuals to experience intimately the healing love of "these Two Hearts": the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

On 15 August 1876, Brother Columba took final vows in Holy Cross, which included the fourth vow of mission, whereby the religious would vow "to go anywhere in the world the Superior General pleases to send me." In *These Two Hearts*, Brother Ernest writes the following about Columba's missionary spirit: "He had finally attained the greatest desire of his heart. He immediately volunteered to go to India and also to Molokai to help Father Damien in the magnificent work among the lepers."⁵⁰ Instead, on 13 September 1876, Columba is initially assigned to Saint Joseph's Orphan Asylum in Lafayette, Indiana.

While at Lafayette, Columba "used Lourdes water on the sick boys and says that he had *some cures*. During the winter of his last year in Lafayette, he nursed a number of boys with the flu."⁵¹ Brother Columba took no credit for a single cure. Rather, Columba claimed that the cures were effected by the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. During his time at the asylum working with young boys, the healing ministry of Brother Columba coincided with the practice and teaching of his trade of shoemaking. He himself was also strengthened and refreshed by his personal and unwavering devotion to Jesus through Mary.

⁴⁹ Rev. Charles O'Donnell, CSC, op. cit.

⁵⁰ Ryan, op. cit., 26

⁵¹ VandenBossche, op. cit., 2; emphasis is my own.

In his paper entitled "Holy Cross on the Wabash: St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum, Lafayette, Indiana", Brother Franklin Cullen, CSC, records the history of the asylum and the brothers who served there. He writes, "Brothers Columba O'Neill and Raymond Guilfoyle, the former a shoemaker, the latter a teacher, were the first Brothers assigned to the asylum with Brother Raymond designated director or superior. Brother Benoit Crowe joined them as prefect in 1877."⁵² Brother Raymond, albeit a good teacher, was known for habitually "finding fault" with and antagonizing the other brothers in his local community; thus, Father Edward Sorin eventually removed Raymond from this apostolate and sent Brother Placidus Ochs as a replacement in 1877—followed by Brother Luke Cahill, appointed local superior in 1879. Brothers Columba, Climacus, and Mark (who eventually succeeded Luke as superior) instructed countless orphans in the trade of shoemaking during their years at this apostolate.⁵³ The brothers continued their work at the asylum until 1895, "at which time they and the Brothers at St. Mary's School in town were recalled to Notre Dame."⁵⁴

Brother Columba remained at the asylum until shortly after petitioning to return to Notre Dame in a letter dated 11 May 1883.⁵⁵ In this letter, Columba circumvented seeking the permission of his local superior—Brother Luke Cahill—and, instead, wrote directly to the provincial (Father L'Etourneau) or to the superior general (Father Sorin).⁵⁶ After asking if he has the right to send a letter to a "higher superior" without first being approved to do so by the local

⁵² Franklin Cullen, CSC, "Holy Cross on the Wabash: St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum, Lafayette, Indiana" (1991) 3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 9

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10

⁵⁵ Brother Columba O'Neill, CSC, Letter to "Rev. Father," (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 11 May 1883). Cf. also the 1885 obedience list, also made available by the MWPA.

⁵⁶ N.B.: We do not know to which of the two the letter was written because it is addressed to "Rev. Father." Still, it is reasonable to infer that Columba wrote to his provincial rather than to the superior general.

superior, Columba requested to leave the asylum because there was no longer any need for his trade because, as he writes, "the boys have their shoes."⁵⁷

Columba also lamented that the current prefect—Brother Adolphus Walsh—was not doing his job and was leaving it to Columba to pick up the slack. In Columba's words, "Brother Adolphus don't [*sic.*] want to prefect. [...] it is too much for just one Brother. [...] If you had anyone who had not anything to do up there [at Notre Dame] you might send them down and send me home [to Notre Dame] and work in my shop."⁵⁸ What is more, the boys were not fond of Brother Adolphus either, and Columba expressed that Adolphus's unhealthy relationship with alcohol might have been contributing to his incompetence as prefect. Namely, Columba reported that Adolphus would habitually sneak beers out of the refrigerator and tell the sister managing the kitchen that the extra beer was for Columba. I imagine Columba chuckling as he writes, finding Adolphus's lie pitiable and laughable, "I'm surprised that he never told me he got [a beer] for me!"⁵⁹ Even though he felt needed elsewhere and was growing aggravated with a drunken dud of a prefect, Columba was not only able to incorporate elements of humor in his letter to his superior; he was also soberly cognizant of the crosses he must bear. He firmly believed that trust in the Sacred Heart would allow him to persevere for the remainder of his assignment at the asylum. His letter concludes, "I know I must bear the cross. Hope to hear from you sometime. I remain your servant and son in Jesus Christ."⁶⁰

Back to Notre Dame: Devotions and Healing (1885-1923)

By the Summer of 1885, Brother Columba returned to Notre Dame and was assigned to the campus shoe shop, where he remained until his death on 23 November 1923. On the one

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

hand, not much *happened* during this thirty-eight-year span at Notre Dame: a brother living a simple life, praying in secret, making and repairing shoes. He seldom stepped foot outside of Notre Dame, except for occasional visits to his sister Eliza's parish, St. Mary's in Keokuk, IA, where the Rev. George Giglinger was pastor. On the other hand, Columba's healing ministry spread far beyond the bounds of Notre Dame's campus—from the Sacred Heart of Jesus at the center of campus, to Mary's Immaculate Heart atop the golden dome, and out to the rest of the world.

A decisive moment in Brother Columba's healing ministry occurred around the year 1890, when Brother Columba began producing and distributing images of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (approx., 10,000 cloth badges) and the Sacred Heart of Jesus (approx., 30,000 cloth badges).⁶¹ The brother's other obligations did not come to a halt, and his devotions were by no means offered at the expense of his other duties. We observe Columba's perseverance especially in the following events—which, to a saint, are neither distractions nor disturbances; rather, these are opportunities to pray and to heal.

In the early 1890s Brother Columba also assumed the responsibility of personal caretaker of Father Edward Sorin. This post lasted from 1891 until Sorin's death on 31 October 1893. Columba's devotion to the "Two Hearts" of Jesus and Mary not only coincided with the brother's looking after Sorin during the emeritus president's final days, but it also inspired Columba's work with the Blessed Mother's consolation and her Son's healing mercy. Columba also maintained his sense of humor even when encountering others' as well as his own suffering. For instance, in a

⁶¹ Cf. *Scholastic* vol. 96, no. 1 (1 October 1954). In this newspaper article announcing the renaming of the Brothers' Community House after Brother Columba in 1954, the editors write, "[at this time,] Brother Columba O'Neill, C.S.C, then cobbler at Notre Dame, began to promote devotion to the Sacred Heart among the students at the University. He did this by giving out little red Sacred Heart badges and asking those who received them to say the prayer that is printed thereon."

description of Father Sorin's last days under the care of Brother Columba, the late Rev. Arthur J. Hope, CSC, includes the story of a young seminarian who runs up to Columba and excitedly asks, "You were with Father Sorin when he died?" Columba responds, 'Pshaw, Boy! He was no saint!'"⁶² All the while, Columba upheld an attitude of prayerfulness, humility, cheerfulness, and hope in the promise of eternity that awaits us beyond our suffering.

Shortly after Sorin's death, the Rev. Provincial William Corby, CSC, (1833-1897) ordered Brother Columba to return full time to the cobbler shop. This re-assignment to full time ministry as a cobbler inaugurated Columba into a season in which to live the command of *ora et labora*—or, as Mother Teresa would later say, "Pray the work!"—and be present in a more intentional manner with the students at Notre Dame. Yet, this calm season was short lived: for after about a year Father Corby decided that Brother Columba would go to Chicago to have his disabled foot operated on by the famous Swiss-born American surgeon, Dr. Nicholas Senn.⁶³ As Brother Ernest Ryan has explained in *These Two Hearts*, Brother Columba was obedient to his provincial's request and immediately had his foot repaired. Still, this decision troubled the cobbler deeply. Not caring "whether he limped or not," Brother Columba "dreaded the expense to his community most of all. But he went and so successful was the operation that it seemed almost a miracle."⁶⁴ Ernest's words suggest that, if we had asked for an account of the success of

⁶² Rev. Arthur J. Hope, *Notre Dame—One Hundred Years* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1948), 383.

⁶³ Nicholas Senn (October 31, 1844 – January 2, 1908) was a Swiss-born American surgeon, instructor, and founder of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States. He served as the president of the American Medical Association in 1897–98 and as chief surgeon of the Sixth Army Corps in 1898, seeing service in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. He was involved in experimental research, particularly of acute pancreatitis, plastic surgery, head and neck oncology, the intestinal tract, and the treatment of leukemia with x-rays. After 1893, Dr. Senn was attending surgeon at the Presbyterian Hospital and surgeon-in-chief of Saint Joseph's Hospital, as well as a professor of surgery at the Chicago Polyclinic and a lecturer on military surgery at the University of Chicago.

⁶⁴ Ryan, *op. cit.*, 27

this operation, Columba would have attributed the cause of this healing entirely to the Sacred Heart. As such, Columba would have identified Dr. Senn as a mere instrument through whose surgical prowess the Divine Physician's hand was at work. Columba's life of prayer and devotion remained constant even in this season of attending both to his own as well as to others' suffering.

I have heretofore highlighted some significant events in the life of Brother Columba, whose life was one of uninterrupted prayer through which countless men and women—Catholic as well as non—have been healed. His life, moreover, embodied the virtue of humility—a poverty with which the cobbler was not attached to any worldly possession, post, or opinion; rather, Brother Columba went where he was needed, when he was called, and never without his devotion to "These Two Hearts."

PART TWO

The Giglinger Correspondence

The Historical Frame

What has been said in the first part of this paper has been an historical sketch of the life of Brother Columba. The preceding has been necessary for establishing a basis on which to discuss, in the pages to come, Columba's correspondence with Rev. George Giglinger and the cures attested therein. In his petition for the initiation of the cause for canonization of Brother Columba, Brother Philip Smith, CSC, has written the following:

Of specific interest is the entirety of Chapter Eight [of Brother Ernest's *These Two Hearts*] (pp. 36-44) in which the biographer cites from many letters written by Brother Columba to Reverend George W. Giglinger (1868-1957) pastor of St. Mary's Church (1906-1926) in Keokuk, Iowa. The two men wrote a series of twenty-six letters to each other between October 1912 and September 1923. These letters are in the holdings of the Midwest Province Archives, and I believe that there are many other letters written by the two men that have yet to be found or are permanently lost. Giglinger also wrote two letters to Brother Ernest: one in 1933, ten years after Columba died, when the priest returns to the congregation "30 or 40 of them [Columba-letters]," and the second letter in 1947, when Brother Ernest is requesting information for his biography *These Two Hearts*.⁶⁵

Because Giglinger is definitive in his estimation that Columba is a saint and has himself observed countless cures through the cobbler's devotions, I will focus on the letters penned by Giglinger from 4 November 1913 until shortly before Columba's death in 1923,⁶⁶ as well as two letters written by Giglinger after Columba's death. According to Brother Ernest's *These Two Hearts*, the extant letters of Giglinger's begin about three years after "word began to spread

⁶⁵ Smith, "Petition for Canonization of Brother Columba" (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 2 November 2021) 3.

⁶⁶ Cf. South Bend *Tribune* (20 November 1923). The brother's decline and eventual death was caused by Columba's contracting the Spanish Flu in 1920, from which the brother—suffering bouts of illness and difficulty breathing ever since—never fully recovered.

around [in 1910] that Brother Columba was working 'miracles,'"⁶⁷ though it is likely that Giglinger and Columba began corresponding as early as the pastor's assignment to Keokuk in 1906. These letters not only provide insight into the parish priest's own experience of the working brother, but they also suggest that there was a widespread consensus in the early twentieth century that the Giglinger correspondence was, according to a certain newspaper, "very revealing and provides authentic history of [Columba's] successes with the sick. Fortunately, Father Giglinger preserved all of the correspondence and later gave it to the [Holy Cross] community."⁶⁸ I will therefore analyze the Giglinger correspondence with an especial emphasis on the people Columba ministered to and healed: for in telling the story of one individual person, one must necessarily account for those with whom the individual interacted. And so, a consideration of Giglinger's letters necessarily introduces us to some of the key players in Columba's life. In fact, *all* of the persons for whom Giglinger asked Columba to pray would have been key players for Brother Columba. Thus, even if I can only supply a brief *survey* of the population of people who received Columba's prayers and benefitted from his devotion, it will nonetheless become clear that Columba's devotion was intentional and personal. This is true even if the brother never came in physical contact with a majority of those for whom he dutifully prayed.

An Analysis of the Giglinger Letters

Throughout the year 1913, Father Giglinger wrote to Brother Columba at the Notre Dame cobbler shop a total of three times. The three letters from this year occur within a two-month

⁶⁷ Ryan, op. cit., 31. Brother Ernest then writes: "In conformity with the decrees of various Popes, and especially with those of Urban VII, we hereby declare that we are giving to the use of such words as cures, miracles, etc. only their purely natural meaning. We are only repeating such events as they were told or have come down to us in writing. We submit now and hereafter to the infallible Church which alone has the right to pronounce on such matters."

⁶⁸ *Midwest News Notes*, 13(4) (18 January 1980).

span—from November thru December of the same year. Giglinger and Columba appear to have been friends for some time prior to these initial letters. Accordingly, these letters begin *in medias res*—without any introduction, jumping right in to reports of cures, and providing Columba with life updates on his sister Eliza (a parishioner of Giglinger's).

In a first letter dated 4 November 1913, Giglinger writes to Columba in request of "prayers for some poor suffering people."⁶⁹ From Dublin, Ireland, Mrs. Brady was the sister of Bishop Peter Joseph O'Reily (1850-1923), and she suffered from failing eyesight. Because Giglinger was, in Columba's words, "so much interested in the Sacred Heart Shrine,"⁷⁰ the cobbler supplied the pastor with Sacred Heart badges to distribute to the afflicted. A steward of Columba's Sacred Heart Apostolate, Giglinger gave Mrs. Brady one of the "little red Sacred Heart badges"⁷¹ and likely had her pray the words "Sacred Heart of Jesus cure me" several times a day "for a while."⁷² The prayer on Columba's badge was "Sacred Heart of Jesus, Thy Kingdom Come," and the brother ordinarily told folks—such as Mrs. Brady—to make a novena, and several times each day to pray, "Sacred Heart of Jesus cure me." He also advocated pinning the badge close to or on the afflicted area.

In addition to Mrs. Brady, Giglinger also mentions a young man suffering from rheumatism, an eleven-year-old boy who desired to be a priest but suffered from "growths on both sides of his neck," the child's father who experiences acute and chronic chest colds, and Giglinger's nephew and two nieces in Germany—the nephew and one niece having been cured. Giglinger requests that Columba pray for all these intentions; and in the postscript of this letter, Giglinger closes with a report that Columba's sister Eliza—whom the priest calls "Mrs. Mc"—is

⁶⁹ Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 4 November 1913)

⁷⁰ Columba, Letter to Giglinger (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 11 December 1913)

⁷¹ *Scholastic* vol. 96, no. 1 (1 October 1954).

⁷² Columba, Letter to Giglinger (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 9 October 1912)

doing well. This sort of postscript occurs a total of nine times throughout the portion of the Giglinger correspondence.

In a letter dated 1 December 1913, Giglinger reports to have given a Sacred Heart badge to a young man who is "pretty deaf" and to have instructed the man to say five times a day "'Sacred Heart of Jesus cure me' and to keep it up for nine days or longer."⁷³ As is the case with this young boy and several other afflicted persons throughout the Giglinger correspondence, Father Giglinger often omits follow-up about individual persons. He does, nonetheless, report when there are marked changes to one's situation but not yet total cures. For instance, Giglinger mentions in this 1913 letter a German nun from Strasberg, who received a Sacred Heart badge, prays often according to Columba's prayer formula, and is "not yet well, but she is cured of...troublesome pains."⁷⁴ Giglinger also includes, "now she can rest at night which she could never do before."⁷⁵ It appears, then, that Columba had been praying for this nun for some time, and Giglinger witnesses to Columba's far-reaching healing ministry by reporting that the nun experienced some healing with respect to her affliction. While there is no future mention of this German nun, perhaps such an omission is appropriate because of the pastor's and the cobbler's unwavering trust that the Sacred Heart will, through the prayers of Brother Columba, heal all entrusted to the Lord's care. The final letter of 1913—a post card—also has an omission of this kind, which is worthy of mention because, as Giglinger writes, "there were two cures in Germany."⁷⁶

The pastor only explicitly describes, albeit briefly and abruptly, one of the two cures. He reports that one of the cured is a "little girl," whose parents express the following words of

⁷³ Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 1 December 1913)

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Giglinger, Post card to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 10 December 1913)

gratitude to Columba: "that God may reward you a thousand times."⁷⁷ Also in a spirit of gratitude, Giglinger thanks Columba in advance for praying for another friend in Germany who "is in very bad shape."⁷⁸

Giglinger reports on 28 January 1914 that the mother of the above deaf boy is "suffering from a sickness peculiar to her sex...who is afraid to have the operation because of her weak heart."⁷⁹ Without saying much else about the woman's situation, Giglinger requests that Columba pray both for her and her son's healing. There is also mention that Mrs. Smith—for whom Giglinger and St. Mary's parishioner Mrs. Minerva (Minnie) L. Schwiete (1846-1943) asked Columba to pray—has been cured and "is doing nicely now."⁸⁰ Minnie Schwiete was, with Giglinger, a devotee of Columba's and a key participant in the brother's devotions and healing ministry. This single woman from Keokuk, born to German immigrants Charles Frederick Schwiete (1829-1912) and Mana Antonette Schwiete (1830-1880), wrote twenty-eight letters to Brother Columba. The first of these letters attested to the healing of a little girl who was, in Schwiete's words, "entirely cured [and] is getting fat. Father [Giglinger] says it is a most wonderful cure as she had St. Vitus Dance[—a neurological disorder characterized by spontaneous muscle movements—]so bad."⁸¹

The remaining letters of 1914 span the months of September and October, and Giglinger reports several cures. In a letter dated 6 September 1914, a sister working at a hospital is said to have been relieved of her "violent headaches" thanks to the Sacred Heart.⁸² Additionally, ten

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 28 January 1914)

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Schwiete, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 16 October 1913). Cf. also Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 16 October 1916), in which one of Giglinger's school-boys was also cured of St. Vitus dance and got "practically well in a day or two."

⁸² Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 6 September 1914)

days later—on 16 September of the same year—Giglinger writes that a certain Mr. Delverin's eyesight has improved on account of Brother Columba's devotion. "Before you gave him the badge," Giglinger writes, "he could read nothing without glasses. ...[But now] he no longer needs them."⁸³ Accordingly, Mr. Delverin was grateful "for the gift bestowed upon him."⁸⁴ In a similar spirit of gratitude, Giglinger writes on 27 October 1914 about a Professor Koltz of Burlington who, once having "no hope" of recovering from a crippling case of dropsy, is "walking the streets of Burlington" again after two months of praying with a Sacred Heart badge.⁸⁵ Finally, Giglinger reports that his brother's eye is totally cured overseas in Germany.

On 1 February 1915, Giglinger writes to Columba a ninth time—again with prayer requests as well as a report of three known cures. The first of these cures involved a certain Mr. Bevering of Keokuk who attributes his restoration to perfect health to the Sacred Heart, the second of which involved an unnamed boy born blind who gained the ability to see through Columba's devotion, and the last of which involved the healing of Giglinger's niece in Germany, who was also cured of some form of blindness.⁸⁶ According to Giglinger's letter, the condition from which Bevering suffered was "consumption" (i.e., tuberculosis or some aggressive form of lung infection), and the man was reportedly "in bad shape."⁸⁷ Concerning the boy born blind, Giglinger calls this healing a "most wonderful cure" and remarks, "God's ways are wonderful!"⁸⁸ And of his niece the priest states, quite matter-of-factly, that her "eyes...were cured through the Sacred Heart"—an indication that such healings were becoming routinely commonplace for Columba. Giglinger also expresses his desire to visit his family in Germany despite the carnage

⁸³ Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 16 September 1914)

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 27 October 1914)

⁸⁶ Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 1 February 1915)

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

of the First World War (28 July 1914 – 11 November 1918). Anxious, he asks Columba to "pray for [him] that [he] may know God's will in regard to [his] going."⁸⁹ After some months, Giglinger writes on 16 April 1915 of his decision to visit his family in June of the same year. Trusting in his friend's counsel, support, and intercession, Giglinger would travel to Germany an additional time after the war had ended in 1921.

Giglinger's letter dated 5 April 1915 especially indicates how Columba took every prayer intention seriously: for Giglinger writes, "it is a pleasure to write to you, for you take the heaviest demands on your time good naturedly."⁹⁰ For example, Giglinger mentions in passing that a Mr. Albert Miller of Keokuk—"for whom," Giglinger writes, "I wrote you [at an earlier time]"—has been cured of tuberculosis.⁹¹ It was likely months or years since the two had corresponded of this man, and it is unlikely that Brother Columba ever met Mr. Miller in person. Yet, Columba made it his duty to pray for this and every intention that came to his notice, and he did so both with fidelity as well as with specificity and intentionality.

On 14 June 1915, while passing through New York en route to Germany, Father Giglinger gave Sacred Heart badges to "two New York ladies" about whom Giglinger had told Columba the prior year.⁹² One woman suffered from headaches and stomach problems, and the other—"an old maid" and a faithful Catholic—has been told that doctors cannot assist her after a terrible fall and a lingering sense of "nervousness."⁹³ These women sent a five-dollar donation—which, by inflation, is equivalent to about \$135 today—through Giglinger to Columba so that the brother might build a shrine to the Sacred Heart. Though at first discouraged by the Very Rev.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 5 April 1915)

⁹¹ Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 16 April 1915)

⁹² Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 14 June 1915)

⁹³ Ibid.

Superior General Français,⁹⁴ the shrine was eventually completed because of such donations "in thanks for prayers answered."⁹⁵ Giglinger concludes his pre-voyage letter—which Columba would have received while the priest was already "on the ocean"—with mention of the answered prayers for the "most wonderful cure" of a ticket agent whose eyesight has been fully restored.⁹⁶

By the mid-1910s Brother Columba's renown had spread throughout the world. From Notre Dame where there will be a great "celebration," according to Giglinger, "...when you [Columba] are canonized"⁹⁷ to Holland where a recipient of Columba's prayers who suffered several miscarriages celebrated her newborn's first half-birthday,⁹⁸ countless Christians and non-Christians experienced cures credited to Columba's prayers. The "Two Hearts" of Jesus and His Mother Mary accompanied Brother Columba as well as his friend Father Giglinger throughout their life in Christ on Earth, and these same "Two Hearts" would carry the saintly duo—Columba in 1923 and Giglinger in 1957—from this life into the next. Even when Giglinger was undergoing hernia surgery in 1921, he asked his friend at Notre Dame, "pray to [the] S[acred] H[earth] for me and some other intentions too."⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Cf. Français's 1915 post card: "Dear Brother Columba, I admire and share your devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord, but it seems to me it would be difficult and perhaps impossible to establish a shrine in His honor—The place [the Grotto] is taken by Our Lady of Lourdes. There is no room for two shrines in the same place. Besides that, we have in the big church the finest, the most beautiful chapel in the honor of the Sacred Heart—Look at the stain glasses [sic] behind the main altar – they are all preaching and directing the devotion to the Sacred Heart. But it is necessary to understand and love them—such is my opinion. You would be very kind, dear Brother Columba to send me a pair of shoes and a pair of overshoes adapted to it. You know I have very small feet. Pray for me—I pray for you too."

⁹⁵ Mrs. A. T. Coughlin of Davenport, IA, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 4 January 1918)

⁹⁶ Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 14 June 1915); Cf. also Giglinger's letter dated 11 March 1916, wherein the priest mentions a *South Bend Tribune* article on the progress of Columba's shrine to the Sacred Heart. Giglinger "Hope[s] it succeeds beyond your [Columba's] expectations."

⁹⁷ Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 16 October 1916)

⁹⁸ Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 3 December 1916)

⁹⁹ Giglinger, Letter to Columba (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 15 May 1921)

The frequency with which Giglinger corresponded with Columba lessened toward the end of the brother's life. In the same letter in which Giglinger requested prayers for a hernia operation among other concerns, the priest mentioned, "I hear you have not been well."¹⁰⁰ Undoubtedly this comment is in reference to Columba's contracting the Spanish Flu in 1920, from which he suffered complications until his death in 1923. Columba's declining health is certainly a factor to be considered in accounting for the gap in correspondence between the years 1918 and 1921. Nonetheless, in the only extant letter from 1921, Giglinger also offers the following, which comes in anticipation of the hernia surgery as well as in support of Columba during his final days: "In the spiritual life it is those that are more alive spiritually than physically that can do the most good."¹⁰¹

These words provide insight into not only the individual lives of Columba and Giglinger but also a fundamental tenet of their friendship: namely, that heroic virtue is possible in and through bodily suffering, for Christ himself has triumphed over sin and death forever. Accordingly, even though Giglinger expressed twice in 1922 that he hoped Columba's health would improve so that the brother could visit Keokuk,¹⁰² he preferred that his friend spend his final days at his home—at Notre Dame—where providence has led him, and where he "can do the most good" through his ceaseless prayers to the "Two Hearts" he loved so well.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Cf. Giglinger's letters dated 12 May and 8 October (Notre Dame, IN: MWPA, 1922).

CONCLUSION

Brother Columba's was a life of sanctity that persisted in and through personal hardship and the suffering of others. By his devotion to the "Two Hearts" of Jesus and Mary, this brother faithfully commended others' suffering to these "Two Hearts" and steadfastly trusted that all will be well because of Christ's precious blood—which descends like rain from his pours while weeping in the garden, flows from his side as he hangs lifeless upon the cross, sanctifies all who follow him to Calvary, pulses with burning love through the Sacred Heart, and fills the cup of our salvation.

Brother Columba lived a cruciform life, for he—"with his misshapen feet" and the rejections he received because of them—never ceased to press his entire being up against Christ's chest, behind whose flesh and bones beats the Heart that offers healing and forgiveness to all. Because this humble cobbler cooperated so well with the hand of God's providence and followed its direction all the way to Calvary to be with God's only Son, Brother Columba made it his life's work to allow his own heart—which was heroically strong because of its weakness—to beat in time with the Heart of our Savior. Such an imitation of Christ allowed Brother Columba also to know in an intimate way the sorrows of Mary as she stands and weeps at Christ's side. The cross was the location from which Columba made sense of his own life, created and repaired shoes, ministered to Notre Dame's students and visitors, poured out his own heart "in kind love" to those with whom he corresponded, and died that November day in 1923—only to rise eternally and forever be at one with the "Two Hearts" of his heavenly Mother and Brother.

Father Giglinger, through his letters, gives us a glimpse of this holy man through his frank and informal correspondence with Columba. This parish priest from Keokuk, IA, was definitive in his estimation that Columba ought to be canonized, though these efforts have been

suppressed by a need to advance the causes of Holy Cross's founder, Blessed Basil Moreau, CSC, and a contemporary of Columba's, Saint André Bessette. Thankfully, today Giglinger's definitive estimation—which was shared by Brother Ernest among countless others—is taking shape as the Community and the Diocese of Fort Wayne South Bend expend resources to declare Brother Columba a Servant of God. It is my hope, therefore, that this present work has aided in this process by providing a new perspective and further insight into the life of heroic virtue that Brother Columba upheld. May the Church and all the world continue to benefit from his intercession.

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