

## Leading in the Light of Christ

We at O’Gorman High School would not be here today if it wasn’t for the leaders who came long before any of us were staff or students at the school. You may have seen pictures in our show cases of Father Leonard Della Badia, one of our founding fathers, a priest committed not only to his parishioners, but to guiding and securing Catholic education in the city of Timmins. He dedicated himself to creating and sustaining O’Gorman High School as a private school during a time when the only way this was possible was if parents agreed to pay for their children’s education. And parents did, because they believed in the importance of a separate school system where students could practice, learn about and celebrate their Catholic Faith.

Other photos that you might have seen are of the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. This group of women combined a spirituality of trust in God’s providence with a practical wisdom born of engagement with the world in a wide variety of settings. They carried out their ministries, not solely as spiritual guides but as workers in health care, prison ministry, music, social and ecological justice and fortunately for us, education. In 1953, Sister Helen Leeney became the first Principal of O’Gorman High school and the following five principals were also members of this order, until 1989 when Sister Fay Edmonds retired as the last grey nun to hold the position. For nearly four decades the Grey sisters worked as teachers and principals at O’Gorman High School, helping to promote the private board’s commitment to Catholic Education and to establish a solid foundation here at OHS.

In the school’s common area we have a display case dedicated to our namesake, Father John Robert O’Gorman. If you haven’t taken the time to view the display case, you might want to take a closer look. John Robert O’Gorman was born on June 10, 1880, in Renfrew, Ontario, where he lived until he left home to attend the University of Ottawa. Following his university studies, he entered the Upper Seminary in Montreal, where he was ordained on December 17, 1904. In 1909, he left Canada to further his studies in Rome, and returned a year later, having earned the Degree of Doctor of Canon Law.

He spent the next two years as Rector of the Pembroke Cathedral and in 1912, was called upon to undertake the work of founding a new parish in Cobalt, now known as part of the tri-towns. St. Patrick’s church was built but was destroyed by a tornado, on Good Friday, 1913. A new church was built and a parish school was also formed within the same year. Father O’Gorman acted as pastor of St. Patrick’s church and spiritual guide to the parish school.

Father O’Gorman: Soldier, Scholar, Priest

At the onset of the first World War, Father John O’Gorman immediately enlisted and served in the Chaplaincy Service of the Canadian Army. He returned to his parish in Cobalt in August, 1919 where he continued his ministry until 1926, when he was transferred to the new parish of the Nativity of Our Lord, here in Timmins.

When the Second World War broke out, again Father O’Gorman enlisted and was appointed Head Chaplain and English Speaking Vicar General in the Canadian Armed Forces. His leadership, intellect and

commitment earned him the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. In 1944, Lieutenant Colonel Reverend Doctor John Robert O’Gorman returned to The Nativity of our Lord Parish, in Timmins, where he was appointed pastor.

Renown for his intellect, Father O’Gorman was called upon regularly as Professor at St. Augustine’s Seminary in Toronto. Though many attempts at luring him to the south were made, he was committed to his northern parishioners and he remained in Timmins until his death from cancer on Tuesday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1948 at the age of 68.

Father O’Gorman lived out his ministry with a commitment to faith and a compassion and love for all humanity. As a soldier, he enlisted in two world wars, supported soldiers in their darkest days and gave many their last rights. As a priest he oversaw the building of three northern churches, two of which are still standing today. He was active in all aspects of his parishes and incredibly forward thinking with regards to catholic education. Father O’Gorman was not one to sit back and let life happen around him. He was a “take charge” kind of person who sacrificed so much for the betterment of all those with whom he had contact. It was because of this legacy that he was chosen as O’Gorman High School’s name sake. Soldier, Scholar, Priest; Father John Robert O’Gorman was a true Leader in the Light of Christ.