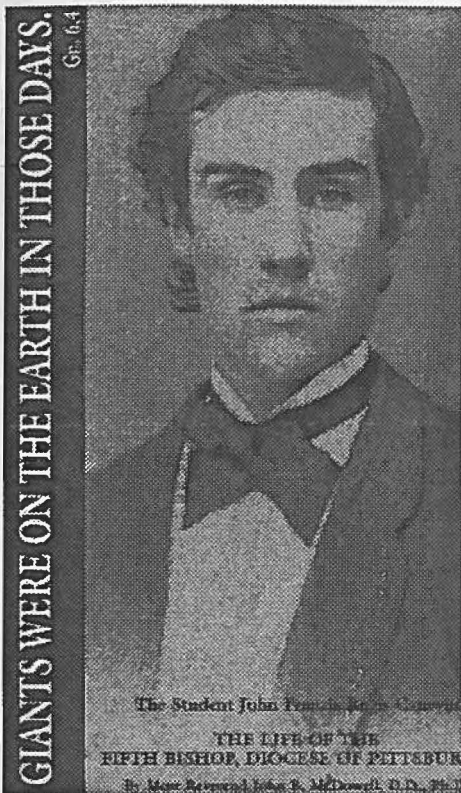


A Bishop Portrays a Bishop

Reviewed by Christopher Bailey



Giants Were on the Earth in Those Days, Most Reverend John B. McDowell, D.D., Ph.D.

John Francis Regis Canevin makes an odd giant. Physically, he was a fragile man, and ultimately his failing health forced him to retire from his duties. But as Bishop of Pittsburgh, he was a pillar of strength. At a time when Pittsburgh did the industrial work of the world, Bishop Canevin made sure the Lord's work was not neglected.

Bishop McDowell, who has spent much of his life as Auxiliary Bishop of Pittsburgh, is intimately familiar with the legacy of Archbishop Canevin. In fact, the diocese Bishop McDowell has known is in many ways Canevin's creation.

The challenge Bishop Canevin faced was a mushrooming diocese made up more and more of immigrant laborers, many of whom lived in appalling slums. In the 17 years of his administration, the diocese grew by a quarter-million members. Hordes of immigrants poured in

from southern and eastern Europe to feed the endless appetite of the factories for new workers. Overwhelmingly they were Catholic, and overwhelmingly they were poor.

Sheer numbers tell us how much work the Church had to do in Pittsburgh. The diocese added 94 parishes during Bishop Canevin's tenure. Four new hospitals opened. The number of schools more than doubled. The number of religious women tripled.

It was also under Bishop Canevin that the diocese built the cathedral that still serves it today, St. Paul in Oakland, a neighborhood that was then rapidly developing as the cultural center of Pittsburgh. The site of St. Paul — only a short stroll from Andrew Carnegie's new museum, library and concert hall — sent a clear message that the once-despised Catholic Church would be at the center of the city's cultural life. Indeed, more than in any other major American city, the Catholic Church is still at the center of culture in Pittsburgh — and that is another of Bishop Canevin's legacies.

So it seems almost strange that now, more than 70 years after his death, Archbishop Canevin is remembered less for what he accom-

plished, which was tremendous, than for the man he was. The descriptions Bishop McDowell has found of Canevin all describe him as humble, quiet and — this word keeps coming up — saintly. In Canevin's letters, says Bishop McDowell, "charity always prevailed."

The descriptions were not flattery, Bishop McDowell insists. "A look into his life makes it clear how these qualities of 'humility,' 'simplicity,' 'reserve' were not just words but truly described this dedicated and unusually quiet and fragile Catholic Prelate who, thank God, was Fifth Bishop of Pittsburgh."

"Thank God" indeed. And we might also add a small prayer of thanks that Bishop McDowell has been given the time to tell this story. It's the story of an extraordinary man who led his diocese not by his dominant personality but by his example — an example that inspired those who knew him to do their very best to help carry out his work. Through Bishop McDowell's book, we have the opportunity to be inspired by that same example.

Note: Giants Were on the Earth in Those Days is available from Kirner's Catholic Bookstore, Downtown and at Caste Village, Whitehall.

A Princely New Book on Gallitzin

The Diocese of Altoona has published a new biography of Prince Demetrius Gallitzin (1770-1840), the "Apostle to the Alleghenies." A Russian nobleman, Gallitzin was a convert to Catholicism and the first priest to receive all major orders in the United States. This new volume, by Margaret and Matthew Bunson, details the travels, labors, and trials of this zealous "prince of pastors," who was instrumental in the evangelization of central and western Pennsylvania. The book is available from Our Sunday Visitor: 1-800-348-2440.

