Very Rev. Edward R. Dyer, P.S.S., Papers

Collection Description

Biographical Note:

Rev. Edward R. Dyer (1854-1925) has the distinction of being both the first native-born American to be appointed Superior of the U.S. Sulpician community and the first provincial of the U.S. Province. Born in 1854 to John I. and Eliza Frances Boone Dyer, Rev. Dyer was one of five surviving children and the only son. Descended from an old Maryland Catholic family, he was raised in Washington, D.C., and Prince George's County, MD. He was educated at the Sulpician seminaries of St. Charles' and St. Mary's in Baltimore, MD, and St. Sulpice in Paris, France. He entered the Society of St. Sulpice while a student and was ordained to the priesthood in 1880. He was sent to Rome to pursue graduate studies at the Minerva but was recalled to Baltimore in 1884 before taking a degree. He was assigned to St. Mary's Seminary, where he taught philosophy and acted as treasurer until 1896 when he was transferred to St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, NY, to serve as the institution's first president. He returned to Baltimore in 1902 when he was appointed Superior of the U.S. Sulpician community. Over the following two decades, the U.S. Sulpician community was granted more autonomy until it was designated an independent province. Rev. Dyer became provincial at that time, a position he held until his death in 1925.

Rev. Dyer was provincial during a time of unprecedented growth and change in the U.S. Catholic Church. The same was true for the U.S. Sulpician community, which enjoyed greater self-governance and saw its membership and responsibilities increase. Rev. Dyer remained committed to the reforms introduced by his predecessor, Rev. Alphonse Magnien, which included adapting the French traditions of their community to conditions in this country and opening the seminary curriculum to contemporary intellectual and social trends. When Rev. Dyer took office, the Sulpicians staffed five seminaries in four dioceses, administered the Divinity College program for The Catholic University of America, and had opened St. Austin's College, a house of studies, near The Catholic University of America. During Rev. Dyer's tenure, the first U.S. Solitude (novitiate) was established, a new seminary was opened in Washington, D.C., a capital campaign to build a new and larger campus for St. Mary's Seminary was launched, and an agreement was made to administer the Basselin Program for The Catholic University of America. Despite these gains, it was a period also marked by disappointment and loss when the Sulpicians departed from the seminaries they administered for the Archdioceses of Boston and New York and saw the destruction of St. Charles' College and High School in Ellicott City through fire in 1911 (later rebuilt at Catonsville, MD).
In addition to his duties as U.S. provincial and president of St. Mary's Seminary, Rev. Dyer was a consultor and trusted advisor to Card. James Gibbons and Abp. Michael J. Curley, both of Baltimore. He was involved with many associations and organizations over the course of his career. Of note is his involvement with the Commission for Catholic Missions among the Colored People and the Indians, serving as secretary-treasurer, 1884-1925, and with the National Catholic Education Association, where he helped found the Seminary Department and served for many years on the department's Executive and General Executive Boards. He played a behind-the-scenes role in the organization of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (known today as

the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops) and was a founder of the Society of St. Gregory of America (1913), an organization dedicated to the promotion of Sacred Music in the country.

This collection contains both official and personal papers, including correspondence, subject files, educational materials, homilies, writings, retreat notes, photographs, and publications. Of special interest to researchers is the correspondence he maintained with the alumni of Sulpician seminaries that provide details of their personal lives and pastoral assignments and that regarding the early period of the National Catholic Welfare Conference as well as the records relating to his role as secretary-treasurer of the Commission for Catholic Missions among the Colored People and the Indians. Languages used in the collection include English, French, and Latin.

Keys have been created for abbreviations and acronyms used in the finding aid.

Bibliography

Christopher J. Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation in Catholic Culture: The Priests of Saint Sulpice in the United States from 1791 to the Present*. Macmillan, 1988.

Douglas J. Slawson, *The Foundation and First Decade of the National Catholic Welfare Council*. Catholic University of America Press, 1992.

Extent: 13 boxes: 7 records storage boxes; 1-1/2 records storage box, 2 document cases; 2 slim document cases; 3 shoeboxes

Date range: c. 1861-1925

Scope & Content

<u>Series 1: Correspondence</u>
Subseries 1.1: General, c. 1889-1925 – 2 records storage boxes
This subseries contains general correspondence that covers almost nearly all of Rev. Dyer's priestly ministry. Incoming and outgoing correspondence has been separated and arranged alpha-chronologically by correspondent. Correspondence with members of male and female religious communities have been filed together under "Religious Men" and "Religious Women," organized alphabetically by name of religious community. Many of the individuals Rev. Dyer corresponded with were alumni or former seminarians of Sulpician-staffed seminaries. When possible, the institution and graduating class have been identified in the comments section. Preservation photocopies have been made for originals with condition issues. Please note that the majority of outgoing letters are handwritten copies or drafts prepared by Rev. Dyer. See the indices created for the General Correspondence series for names of the individuals with whom Rev. Dyer corresponded and a brief description of the letters' contents.

Subseries 1.2: Subject Files, c. 1898-1925 – 1 slim document case
This subseries contains correspondence placed in files organized by subject to centralize letters regarding a specific event, issue, or organization, including the National Catholic War Council/National Catholic Welfare Conference, cases of clergy misconduct, and the St. Gregory Society of America.

Subseries 1.3: Family Correspondence, c. 1878-1925 - 1 records storage box
This subseries contains correspondence between Rev. Dyer and various members of his extended family, including his mother, Fanny Dyer, father, Dr. John I. Dyer, sisters Katharine, Louise, Margaret, Martina, and May; numerous cousins, including the Boone family; and various other relations. Correspondence has been organized by surname and arranged alpha-chronologically. A list of correspondents and their relationship to Rev. Dyer has been prepared. Information compiled on family members has also been placed with the series.

Series 2: Society of St. Sulpice
This series contains the files relating to the Society of St. Sulpice. The material has been organized by province and is comprised mainly of correspondence. Much of the correspondence is in French, which has been arranged alpha-chronologically by correspondent.

Subseries 2.1: Province of Canada, 1891-1919 – 2 folders
This subseries contains correspondence exchanged between the U.S. and Canadian Sulpician communities during the period that Rev. Dyer was a priest and later provincial of the U.S. Sulpician community.

Subseries 2.2: Province of France and Superior Generalate, 1891-1924 – 6 folders
This subseries contains correspondence between the U.S. and French Sulpician communities over the period, 1891-1923, and is largely comprised of letters and documentation exchanged with the Superiors General of the Society (Very Revs. Arthur Jules Captier, Jules Joseph Lebas, and Pierre Henri Garriguet) during the time that Rev. Dyer was a priest and later provincial of the U.S. Sulpician community. Much of the correspondence is in French. Correspondence is arranged alpha-chronologically by correspondent.

Subseries 2.3: Province of the United States, c. 1861-1925 – 1.5 records storage boxes
This subseries contains correspondence and subject files relating to the U.S. Province of the Sulpicians during the time that Rev. Dyer was a priest and later provincial of the U.S. Sulpician community. The files have been divided into 2 subseries: General and Sulpician Houses. Files placed in the General subseries are regarding Province-wide matters, including information on membership and the work of Provincial committees. Files placed in the Sulpician Houses subseries are regarding the operation of Sulpician-run seminaries and institutions, including St. Patrick's Seminary & University (Menlo Park, CA); St. Joseph's College (Mountain View, CA), St. John's Seminary (Brighton, MA); St. Joseph's Seminary (Yonkers, NY); St. Charles' College and High School (Ellicott City/Catonsville, MD); St. Mary's Seminary & University (Baltimore, MD); and the Sulpician Seminary of Washington, DC (later renamed Theological College of The Catholic University of America). Of note is the material surrounding the circumstances that led to the withdrawal of the Sulpicians from St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, in 1906 and the subsequent departure of the five Sulpicians (James Driscoll, Richard K. Wakeham, Timothy P. Holland, Francis Gigot, and John R. Mahoney) who chose to remain at the seminary and were incardinated into the Archdiocese of New York. Also of interest are the files regarding the relocation and reconstruction of the campus for St. Charles' College and High School (1848-1969) in Catonsville, MD, after the original campus in Ellicott City, MD, was destroyed by fire in 1911. Sulpician House files are arranged alphabetically by institution name. Location information is also indicated.

Series 3: Special Collections
This subseries contains the files maintained by Rev. Dyer for the special collections he administered for the Commission for Catholic Missions Among Colored People and Indians (CCMACPI) and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith (SPF). Both annual collections were established by decree of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884. The funds raised for the CCMACPI (today known as the Black and Indian Mission Office) was to benefit mission work among African Americans and American Indians and the SPF to support foreign missions. Rev. Dyer served as secretary-treasurer of the CCMACPI and secretary for the national office of the SPF until his death in 1925. Records relating to the CCMACPI comprise the bulk of the series. Because discussion of the two collections is often mentioned in the same correspondence, the decision was made to keep records for both collections together. [Note: A microfilm version of the CCMACPI material in Rev. Dyer's papers can be found with the records for the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions on deposit at Special Collections, Marquette University.]

Subseries 3.1: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, c. 1884-1893 - 1 document case
This subseries contains the correspondence and reports exchanged with the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and is arranged chronologically.

Subseries 3.2: Correspondence – CCMACPI and SPF, c. 1886-1919 [bulk dates: 1887-1909] – 1.5 records storage boxes
This subseries is arranged alpha-chronologically by diocese/organization. Please note that the decision was made to file the correspondence under the name of the diocese or vicariate apostolic in use at that time. Correspondence with men's and women's religious communities has been centralized and organized alpha-chronologically under the name of the community. The bulk of the correspondence is regarding the CCMACPI.

Subseries 3.3: Applications for Aid - CCMACPI, c. 1886-1909 – .5 records storage box
This subseries contains the applications submitted to the CCMACPI for financial assistance from eligible dioceses, vicariates, and religious communities, 1897-1925. The applications are arranged alpha-chronologically by diocese/organization according to the name in use at that time.

Subseries 3.4: Administrative, c. 1897-1925 – 8 folders This subseries contains administrative files, including annual reports and statements, statistics, financial committee reports, and newspaper clippings, 1897-1925, maintained for the CCMACPI and SPF. Of significance is the correspondence with the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, members of the Commission's board, and St. Katharine Drexel, foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

Subseries 4: Homilies, Talks, & Writings
Subseries 4.1 Homilies, c. 1880-1929, n.d. – 4 folders
This subseries contains homilies, including meditations, prepared by Rev. Dyer on a variety of topics, including feast days, the purpose of the annual retreat, and sin. A subject/title list can be found with the folders

Subseries 4.2: Talks, c. 1926-1929, n.d. – 2 folders
This subseries contains addresses given by Rev. Dyer, on such topics as education and entrance requirements to the seminary. A subject/title list can be found in the folder.

Subseries 4.3: Writings, c. 1900-1907, n.d. – 1 folder
This subseries contains originals and photocopies of Rev. Dyer's writings on various theological and liturgical topics, including educational standards for seminaries, the existence of God, and the role of the Eucharist in salvation. Some materials are written in Latin.

Series 5: Personal
Subseries 5.1: General, 1879-1925 – 7 folders
This subseries contains various and miscellaneous personal papers of and information regarding Rev. Dyer.

Subseries 5.2: Clerical Studies, c. 1874-1894, n.d. - 1 records storage box
This subseries contains notes and materials that span the period Rev. Dyer entered the seminary as a student to his time as a faculty member and superior of a seminary. Notes are written in English, Latin, and French. Files have been organized by subject.

Subseries 5.3: Solitude, n.d. [c. 1880-1881] – 2 folders
This subseries contains notes that have been identified as relating to his Solitude (Sulpician novitiate), concerning such subjects as seminary studies and serving as a seminary director and leading retreats.

Series 6: Printed Material - 3 shoeboxes and 1 slim document case
This series contains the breviaries, books, and articles found with Rev. Dyer's papers, c. 1878-1916.This series also includes as the ordos of Cardinal James Gibbons for the years 1881-1919 found with Rev. Dyer's papers. (Note: The following years are missing: 1883-1886, 1892, 1898, 1908, 1914, and 1918.)

Series 7: Winefride Martin Estate, c. 1895-1908 – 2 document cases
This series contains documents relating to the estate of Winefride Martin (1819-1894), for which Rev. Dyer was an executor. Miss Martin, a native of Ireland, was residing in Maryland at the time of her death. The bulk of her estate was left to a number of Catholic churches and institutions in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Note: Materials created by and relating to Rev. Dyer can be found in the three collections that comprise the Associated Archives at St. Mary's Seminary & University. Other institutions with materials on Rev. Dyer include Special Collections at The Catholic University of America,

where the records for the National Catholic Education Association and National Catholic Welfare Conference are on deposit.