

JEREMIAH JACOB HARTY: THE FIRST AMERICAN ARCHBISHOP OF MANILA

By

RUPERTO C. SANTOS

1. Birth, Parents and Priestly Life:¹

Andrew and Julia Harty belonged to that industrious, thrifty, generous people for which the County of Tipperary, Ireland has become synonymous.² In the early 1800s they left their country and settled in Saint Louis. They registered at Saint John's Church. Andrew was a bricklayer. And with his sober and frugal life, he entered the retail grocery business. Julia, with open and generous heart, proved her loving maternal influence on her sons and daughters.

From these parents was born Jeremiah Harty on November 5, 1853 in St. Louis Missouri. He was baptized in Saint John's Church by its then rector Father Michael O'Brien.³ When the Harty's moved to Saint Bridget's parish, young Jeremiah attended his first Catholic schooling under the Sisters of Saint Joseph at West Morgan and Beaumont streets. Later, the school became Saint Bridget's Orphan Asylum. After the Civil War, the Christian Brothers opened a boys' school in the old Saint Bridget's Church, on the 24th street. Jeremiah was among its first students. This was his primary schooling. He begun his collegiate preparatory courses at Saint Louis University, which was under the Jesuit Fathers.

¹The materials in this section are taken mostly from the jubilee booklet of Saint Leo's Church, and from the short account of his personal life which can be found in the archive of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis, Missouri, U.S.A. The present archivist, Sister Teresa Eagan, O.S.J., states: "While Father Harty was a popular and prominent man in Saint Louis, there is very little information on his life."

²*Saint Leo's Parish Yearbook*, 1903, p.3.

³*Ibid.*

His school days were best described with these memories:

"The teachers' lessons were not lost upon his young unfolding mind. He showed a strong liking to the Sanctuary and everyday grew and became a fixed desire to be a priest."⁴

Heeding the divine call, Jeremiah entered the Minor seminary for missionary priests at Saint Vincent's College at Cape Girardeau, Missouri in the Fall of 1873. At that time the seminary was being administered by the Congregation of the Mission, the Lazarist Fathers. The academic curriculum of his studies included Latin and Greek classics; the higher Mathematics, Rhetoric, Literature and Composition. In the latter subjects he achieved his greatest honors as he was named the "best English scholar and composition writer of the house."

When he finished the college curriculum, the young Harty entered the Major seminary. He took up studies in Philosophy; Logic and Ethics. And in 1875, he started his theologate courses and studies preparatory to the Priesthood.

Jeremiah Harty became a cleric on May 2, 1877. The ceremony was held in the seminary chapel. The tonsure and the four Minor orders were conferred upon him by Archbishop P.J. Ryan, the coadjutor bishop of Saint Louis.⁵

By early April, the following year, Jeremiah was summoned by Archbishop Kenrick for the former's forthcoming ordination within Easter week. In preparation for the event, he made his retreat with the Lazarist Fathers.

In the morning of April 26, 1878, he was ordained as Sub-deacon at Saint Vincent. On the following day, he was accepted to the order of the Diaconate. Finally, on Sunday morning at the Church of his baptism twenty years (before), *he was ordained a priest.*

A week later at Saint Bridget's, the church of his parents, he celebrated his first Mass. His parents assisted him and "sent forth their sentiments of honest pride and thanksgiving that a member of the Harty family was now a priest at the altar of their own church."⁶

2. Early Assignments:⁷

The newly ordained priest presented himself for duty. He was temporarily assigned as Assistant Rector to Rev. James Henry of Saint Lawrence O'Toole at 14 and O'Fallon streets. The assignment lasted only for a couple of weeks.

⁴Ibid., p. 4.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷"Its Pastor, Priests and People," *Saint Leo's Jubilee Yearbook*, 1903, p. 2.

Msgr. Walsh requested Archbishop Kenrick to assign Jeremiah as his assistant at Saint Bridget's Church. The request was granted. This appointment proved to be the only one during the ten long but fruitful years of his sacerdotal ministry. He faithfully executed all the duties of his priestly life.

Though labors were at all times arduous and exacting, Jeremiah possessed a robust constitution. He was about five feet ten; well proportioned; with broad expanding sun-lit countenance, whose eyes revealed not just an ordinary mind. He was uniformly kind and his cheerful disposition had a magnet's attraction for all lay and cleric.⁸

The ministry of instruction during those years was the leading feature of his pastoral work. The pulpit was for him a chair of catechesis. He was never a disconsolate preacher. His motto was: "Bark not against the bad, but chant the beauty of the good."⁹ In the pulpit, he was explanatory, didactic, redolent with Scripture text, giving strong examples and illustrations. He carefully prepared his sermons and delivered with "uncommon vigor of diction and earnestness of manner actuated by these and similar axioms."¹⁰ He won at Saint Bridget's a larger group who were led to read, listen and follow the Word of God with an ever-increasing appreciative minds and hearts.

Another ministry, by which Jeremiah has devotedly made the parish so involved was the Societies of Devotion. Thus, the parish became a visible and veritable hive of Devotion. This, he also conscientiously applied in the several years that he was in the Metropolitan See of Manila. Father Harty organized the work of the Sacred Heart Devotion of the "First Fridays." And this was his reason: "Give the people the spirit of devotion, all the opportunities, ungrudgingly, freely, and you will always have them."¹¹ According to him, "*piety ever pays.*"

A greater responsibility awaited the young priest. From Saint Bridget, Father Harty moved to a new and larger work. His departure was felt as a great loss by all. This was vividly expressed as: "Father Harty's leaving is the same as removing the main altar from Saint Bridget's." And his ministry was remembered in this poignant message:

"... loved as a man, revered as a priest, popular as a preacher, esteemed as a director of souls for eleven years has he lived among an appreciative people, wisely dividing to them all the Bread of Life, and having the satisfaction of the young as well as of the middle aged and old saved to the Lord."¹²

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 3.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Yearbook of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis, Missouri, 1949, p. 18.

He delivered and bore lasting fruits. The time for promotion was ripe. But, he declined the promotion of rectorship at Annunciation parish. Instead, he appealed to Msgr. Walsh, thus:

"... tell the Archbishop that I am deeply grateful to him, and that it is not because of the fear of the work or onerous duty or a strong assurance of both work and duty that I am willing to accept the commission to create and build a new parish north of Saint Bridget's."¹³

So, the good Msgr. Walsh went to the Archbishop and then returned with an appointment letter for Father Jeremiah Harty as pastor of a newly created parish.

Father Harty was commissioned to the new parish on Nov. 10, 1888. He patiently encountered gloomy hours as well as days of gladness as he started his first assignment. Trials and challenges in the organization of a new parish were many and trying. If there was a necessity to build another temple for God's glory, to raise money would be a problem. But, he did everything with prudence and in full trust in God's providence. Thus, by September of 1889, the new church was completed and then, consecrated. He dedicated his church to perpetuate the memory of the pope of the time, Pope Leo XIII. And so, his church became known as Saint Leo's Church. Father Harty was a pastor of 130 families. He had shown his mark of success in pastoral skills of organization and administration.

His zeal that was manifested in his life at Saint Bridget's received new inspiration under a changed condition. He was now, as God made him a pastor of souls, a shepherd of the sheep. He labored more faithfully as a "faithful and wise steward."

3. The Making of a Bishop:

A continuous cry was translated into resolution. Public opinion and clerical consensus were one: it was high time for him to rule a diocese or be a co-adjutor of any Archbishop.

At first, Rome did not grant the purple sash. The Vatican refused the request of Archbishop John Joseph Kain. Since the Archbishop was suffering from deteriorating health, he implored the Holy See to nominate Father Jeremiah Harty as his co-adjutor.¹⁴

But, the end of the decade played a major role in the ecclesiastical career of Father Harty. The world woke up with the pervading Spanish-American war. With the concluded Treaty of Paris, the once-mighty Spain was stripped of all of her colonial possessions. America annexed Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippine Islands.

¹³Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁴Sr. Maria Xavier McTigue, C.S.S., *History of Saint Leo's Parish* (Missouri: Saint Louis University Dissertation, 1955), p. 13.

And during those uncertain times, of July 1903, the Apostolic delegate to Washington, Cardinal Diomedeo Falconio, announced that *Jeremiah Harty was appointed Archbishop of Manila*.

There's an interesting footnote that draws our curious observations: Benjamin Tracy, former secretary of navy, approached Cardinal James Gibbons and told him that President Roosevelt would be gratified if Thomas Hendrick of the Diocese of Rochester could be appointed Archbishop of Manila.¹⁵ Cardinal Gibbons submitted the qualifications of Bishop Hendrick to Cardinal Rampolla.

Furthermore, Cardinal Gibbons suggested to the President to send a gift in honor of the silver jubilee of the Pope's pontificate. The President took the idea and sent to the Pope an expensively bound collection of the messages of American Presidents to the Senate.¹⁶ But, the naive ploy did not achieve its desired result.

The ironic drama was that immediately after the elevation of Jeremiah Harty, a new pope, Pius X, was elected on August 4, 1903. One of the first acts of the new Pontiff as he assumed office, was the elimination of all secular influence in the election of church officials. This was actually a veto which some Catholic powers used in the process of choosing their respective proteges.

Meanwhile, the archbishop-elect was consecrated in the Church of Saint Anthony in Rome by Cardinal Francesco Satolli, on the feast of the Assumption of 1903. He received the consistorial promotion only on November 9. *On January 7, 1904, the archbishop-elect sailed for his new quarters in Manila*¹⁷. An immense torchlight signaled his departure from Saint Louis. He took possession of Manila, nine days later, January 16, 1904.

The Archdiocese at the time of his arrival embraced a land total of 9,276 square miles with 143 diocesan priests and 102 priests of different Religious Orders. It had a Catholic population of 1,368,795.

Archbishop Harty served the Archdiocese for 13 years. During his term, he faced countless problems and severe financial trials as well — partly due to the continuous litigations against schismatics who seized substantial amounts of property held for years by the Church but unfortunately without the benefit of the register of deeds. These were schools, churches and convents which Spanish Kings have freely given to the Bishops and priests throughout a 350-year occupation. Royal gifts or the rights of the *Patronato* were not and could

¹⁵Stephen Szmcrcsanyi, *History of the Catholic Church in Northeast Nebraska, 1891-1969*. (Omaha: Interstate Publishing Company, 1981), p. 35.

¹⁶John Tracy Ellis, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons*, vol. II (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1952), p. 123.

¹⁷*Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. VI, p. 938. See also the *Yearbook of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis*, 1949, p. 48.

not be backed up by deeds. So, Archbishop Harty had to regain possession of dozens of buildings and ricefields and secure the lawful title for their use.¹⁸

In addition, he had to surmount other difficulties. The most pressing was the language barrier. He could not speak the native dialect or Tagalog. Nevertheless, the Filipinos loved him for his sincerity and his unquestionable dedication to their welfare.

"He won the affection and complete confidence of the people . . . His tact and excellent judgment smoothed away many difficulty for officials high and low. His ready affability, kindly concern and large liberality enlisted the sympathy and cooperation of his people and made the great work before him the common work of all. Archbishop Harty somehow found time to be the personal friend of his people, the confidant of their projects, of their joys, and of their sorrows."¹⁹

While in office, the Archbishop built several hospitals, two colleges, a large number of grammar schools, an orphanage and an asylum. He rebuilt 63 churches, established a new seminary and added 150 priests to the Archdiocese.

Such dedication, however, took its toll in due time. After thirteen years in the Archdiocese, the Archbishop started making contacts for a possible less strenuous assignment in the U.S. Actually, *his health was beginning to break down*. The tropical climate and physical works wore him out.

After the death of Archbishop Riordan of San Francisco, California on December 27, Archbishop Harty sought the assistance of the Cardinal of Baltimore. He requested him that he be assigned to that vacant See.²⁰ The response was the letter of Cardinal Gibbons dated March 31, 1915, "Much as I would like to assist you in the desired appointment, I am helpless . . ."

Finally, in May 16, 1916, the good Archbishop was named successor of Bishop Richard Scannell of the Diocese of Omaha, Nevada.²¹ Prior to his installation, he discussed with newsmen his 13 years of life in the Archdiocese of Manila. He spellbound them about his legal entanglements, his efforts to upgrade sanitation and hygiene and his attempts to teach natives something about scientific farming:

"The churchman of today must justify himself in other ways than on theological questions alone. He must pay attention to education, commerce and religion. I place religion last because in the Church the highest dignity walks last . . . I recognize it as the most important."²²

¹⁸Szmrecsanyi, *History of the Catholic Church in Northeast Nebraska*, 1891-1969, p. 37.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 39.

²⁰Cfr., Arthur Wakeley, "Bishop of Omaha Dies at Rectory in Los Angeles," in *Omaha World-Herald* (October 29, 1972), p. 1. Also cited in *Globe Democrat* (October 30, 1972), p. LIII.

²¹*Western Watchman* (December 21, 1916), pp. 55-56.

²²"Archbishop Harty Will Like Omaha, Wants to be Liked," in *Omaha World-Herald* (December 16, 1916), p. 8.

During his installation as Bishop of Omaha on December 21, 1916, he affirmed that *he would not be worthy of Omaha if he have not been faithful to Manila*. "I send a greeting across the ocean to that Historic See. It nearly drew my heartstrings from me when I saw the sympathy of the people as I was leaving the shores."²³

4. Public Life with James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore:

If there was anyone who had been significant in the very life of Archbishop Harty, someone who left an unforgettable impact on his priestly career, a person on his side in his most trying and worst moments in life — that *person was no other than the Cardinal of Baltimore, James Gibbons*. He was the uncrowned primate of the American Church, a legend in his own time.

It was the Cardinal who gave valuable support and unreserved understanding to Archbishop Harty in time of crises, and no doubt that the Archbishop hold him with uncommon reverence and affection as he admitted it in his letter "for you've been special inspiration to me all these years."²⁴

At this point, we can cite three serious crises to which Cardinal Gibbons gave his time and energy openly in helping the Archbishop personally:²⁵

(1) First, Cardinal Gibbons had been the mediator between President Roosevelt and Archbishop Harty in the sensitive controversy on claims poised by the Catholic Church against the U.S. Government for the damages done to its building, churches and properties in the Philippines during the American occupation.

If one of the main conflicts during the Spanish colonial period was the question of "just conquest" of the country, now, during the American regime, the central issue was the "just compensation" of war reparations of Church properties.

What was then the reaction of the Archbishop Harty?

The Apostolic delegate in Manila, Archbishop Ambrose Agius, O.S.B., appealed to Cardinal Gibbons in January, 1906, for the procurement of compensation for war damages. The amount was fixed to \$363,030.19. It was considered that this amount was too small to what the Church was normally entitled.

William Taft asserted that any destruction brought forth by acts of war, looting and other irregular actions of the military should be excluded from the assessment of damages. The Archbishop Harty judged the amount as totally inadequate. Thus, he wrote to Cardinal Gibbons a critical letter of the said ar-

²³"Thousands Attend the Installation of Omaha Bishop," in *Omaha World-Herald* (December 16, 1916), p. 13.

²⁴Szmrecsanyi, *History of the Catholic Church in Northeast Nebraska, 1891-1969*, p. 40.

²⁵*Ibid.*

rangement. The letter of the Archbishop contained a bitter truth that drew the ire of President Roosevelt. The Archbishop, a personification of a gentle behavior, gave off a sharp protest:

"From the time of American occupation of the Philippines, the Catholic church has been harassed and confounded with an apparently studied purpose on the part of the Government of the United States to control as its own, if not to confiscate outright great charities of undoubted origin."²⁶

Cardinal Gibbons pacified the President's anger. Assuring him that the Archbishop's words were "not his usual style." But, *the Archbishop continued to insist on the rights of the Church*. He published that critical letter and conducted a series of articles in the New York Freeman Journal. Taft manifested a deep disappointment over Harty's attitude, but deemed it as only a temporary aberrations.²⁷

The Archbishop even contended that the military commanders who have been assigned in the country have shown a consistent opposition to the Catholic faith.²⁷

With this stance, we can conclude that, unlike some of his predecessors who were first Spanish then secondarily as pastors of the flock, Archbishop Harty fulfilled his ministerial duties primarily as shepherd and least an American. He exercised the separation of Church and State to the letter and did not hesitate to speak out on the behalf of the good of the Church. He was the first cleric in the Archdiocese to challenge the stand of America in the country.

At the end, the final arrangement was settled with the sum of \$403,030.19. This might be short of the amount the Archbishop had hoped for, but more by \$40,000 than that of Taft's original figure. And lastly, the relationship of the Archbishop with the U.S. Government always remained somewhat strained after his clash with President Roosevelt.

(2) Second, nine years later, Cardinal Gibbons upheld Archbishop Harty's strong argument that it would be dangerous for the former Spanish colony to be given Independence too quickly by the American Government. The Cardinal took the position of the Archbishop that "sooner or later Japan would swoop down on the Islands, annex them and blot out any verge of Christianity." Archbishop Harty had written two letters to the Cardinal in March of 1912, begging him to do everything in his power to *avert this danger*. So, by December 12, 1912, the Cardinal strongly implored all the American Bishops to oppose the passage of the so-called "Jones' Bill," that sponsored the Independence of the Philippines. But even with the *opposition of Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop Harty and William Taft*, the Jones' Bill was signed into law in August 1916, "granting the Islands territorial status and promising them absolute self-determination after a stable government has been established."

²⁶Tracy Ellis, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons*, p. 13.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 124.

From the cable message of the Archbishop to the Cardinal, he stated that *independence could be a serious blow to the Catholic church and her properties would be in great danger*. This was his reasoning.”

“Sooner or later, Japan would swoop down on the Islands, annex them, and blot out any vestige of Christianity.”²⁸

Cardinal Gibbons reported everything to the secretary of the Vatican State, Cardinal Merry del Val. Of which the Archbishop of Manila replied gratefully:

“I see the providence of God in the measures you have pursued as His instrument solicitous for the welfare of the far away Philippine Islands. I pray for and do not doubt that your effort will save the serious danger with which we are apparently confronted.”²⁹

Prior to this letter, the Archbishop worriedly added that if the Filipinos learned that the American bishops were working against their independence, he would “*get out of the Philippines by night — thankful if our lives were spared.*” So, he asked that total discretion must be exercised in this delicate matter.³⁰

(3) Cardinal Gibbons worked out for the release of the exhausted and sickly Archbishop Harty from Manila. He helped the latter with practical support as to assume for him a less taxing appointment in America. The success of his much needed support came when the Archbishop was transferred to the See of Omaha, Nebraska. This was seen in his letter to the Cardinal which revealed his profound gratitude and lasting affection as: “Should Your Eminence come, Your visit will mark a new epoch in the West. You will be received with genuine devotion, and all this will add twenty years to Your precious life.”³¹

He served his new diocese until he was stricken with pleural pneumonia on June 9, 1925. For four months, he was between life and death.

The Archbishop returned to his creator on October 29, 1926. He died at St. Agnes rectory in Los Angeles at 3:55 a.m., Saturday.

His life can be summarized with these edifying words verbalized beautifully by his private secretary during his final departure:

“... he was selected to undertake the almost superhuman task, the tremendous responsibilities that went with the position of spiritual shepherd of the Philippines. He gave the best he had in heart and mind, and his

²⁸Archbishop Harty to Cardinal Gibbons, 14 March, 1913 in *Archdiocesan Archive of Manila*, Philippines.

²⁹Archbishop Harty to Cardinal Gibbons, 10 February, 1913 in *Archdiocesan Archive of Manila*, Philippines.

³⁰Archbishop Harty to Cardinal Gibbons, 16 March, 1913 in *Archdiocesan Archive of Manila*, Philippines.

³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

work was notable. The over-exertion that came to his energy of mind and body resulted in broken health . . . He came to Omaha as bishop a broken man in body.

If Archbishop Harty failed in any way to fulfill the hopes of those who expected much in the light of his previous career, it was due to his over-exertion. But, his virtues gave him a place in the hearts of all. He was a gentle man, with a large sympathy, and no power to resist the pleadings of the fallen. His strength was in the conscience of his people.

It is hard for human nature to live up to the sublimity of priesthood, but these splendid qualities were attained by Archbishop Jeremiah Harty.³²

His reward? He has earned our love . . . Filipino's love!

The Author is much in gratitude with the valuable help of Sister Teresa Eagan, O.S.J., archivist of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Missouri and Fr. Eldon McKamy, chancellor and archivist of the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska. □

³²Szmrecsanyi, *History of the Catholic Church of Northeast Nebraska, 1891-1969*, p. 82.

Chronological Dates of the Archbishop's Life, from the Archdiocesan Archive of Saint Louis Missouri. U.S.A.

No 462 Pg. 457

✓ Harty. jeremias jacobus Rev.

1878 April 28.	Presbyter ord. St. John. St. Louis.	20.52
1878 May 15.	St. M. Bridget's. ass't	Dir. 79
1879	" " "	" 79
1880-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8	" "	Chron
1888 Nov.	St. Louis de Les's Rector	"
1889	" " "	"
1890-1-2-3.	" " "	"
1893-4-5-6-7-8-9	" " "	"
1900-1-2-3	" " "	"

1903 Creatus Archiepiscopus Manillanus
in Philippinis

1903 Dec. 1. Abbat Manillanus.