

## J. Fergus O'Grady Retires

# POPULAR BISHOP HONoured

Bishop J. Fergus O'Grady, retiring head of the Roman Catholic Church in Northern B.C., will be honoured by parishioners, friends, colleagues, and community leaders at a diocesan celebration on Friday. In the form of a testimonial dinner (kind-hearted roast), the occasion will focus on O'Grady's more than 50 years of service and his outstanding contribution to the huge Prince George Diocese, which stretches from Fort Nelson to Quesnel and McBride to the Queen Charlotte Islands. Following a special mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral at 5:00 p.m., the dinner will be held at the Inn of the North. Tickets are available from Jim's Ticket Sales at Zellers or by phoning 963-7253 (days).

He was similarly honoured in August 1984, on the occasion of his fiftieth year as a priest.

O'Grady 78, was born in Hamilton, Ontario and began his Oblate training at age 15 in Edmonton. Further theological studies took place in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ottawa.

He was ordained in 1934, the first graduate of Ottawa's Holy Rosary Scholasticate institution to become a Bishop.

He administered Indian schools in Mission and Kamloops before

coming to Prince George.

A ceremony of consecration in Vancouver in 1956, attended by 18 Bishops and Archbishops, 150 priests and a congregation which overflowed the church, raised O'Grady to the position of Bishop. He had the singular honour of being the first Bishop of the Prince George Diocese. At the time of his consecration, the population of the Catholic community was about 10,000 but growth was rapid as O'Grady began building schools and churches throughout his far-flung diocese.

It should be noted that at the time of O'Grady's arrival in Prince George only one parish, Sacred Heart, existed. St. Mary's, Immaculate Conception and Christ Our Saviour were created later.

Apart from his work for the church, he is best known locally as the man whose foresight and energy led to the establishment of Prince George College in 1960, the first high school in B.C. registering both native and white students. The building of this unique institution is certainly one of the highlights of O'Grady's career.

It was O'Grady who created the name Domano by taking the first two letters from each word in the latin phrase 'Domane Mane Nobis-

cum' (O Lord, Stay with Us). Seven years ago, the new Domano Order was created, involving both men and women. This a helping order with brothers and sisters devoting themselves, on a very basic level, to the alleviation of hunger in our community.

Any discussion of Prince George College reminds the Bishop of Father Peter Rogers, a priest from a Texas Order and the main fundraiser for the college project. After meeting Rogers in Vancouver, O'Grady, impressed with his ability to organize and handle public relations, asked to 'borrow' him. Permission granted, Rogers found himself in a new city driving a very old car. One cold morning he informed the Bishop that the car he had been given to use would not go into reverse. "Not surprising, answered O'Grady, "in Prince George, nothing goes in reverse — everything goes ahead."

He was also instrumental in the establishing of 14 other parochial schools throughout the diocese.

Within three years, 13 new schools were built in the larger communities and, at the time of his retirement, the Bishop had 100 elementary classrooms. Prince George College for senior students and 50 churches and missions in his charge.

To a large degree, the building of schools and churches was done with volunteer labour, ingenuity and prayer.

O'Grady founded the Frontier Apostolates movement in 1956 and since then, more than 3,000 volunteers from around the world have answered his call to serve this area of 133,750 square miles as teachers, houseparents, bus drivers and other personnel. Of O'Grady's Frontier Apostolates, over 600 married and are currently living in Canada, many in this diocese.

Young people have always been of special interest and concern to O'Grady. He says, "Now, more than ever, we have to offer them (young people) a concrete chal-

lenge. "We have to capture their hearts."

When questioned about disappointments in his long career, the Bishop feels there have been relatively few. He cites the untimely deaths of Father Bogues, Father O'Reilly and Father Dore. Another blow was when the new school in Burns Lake burnt to the ground just days after opening. Using volunteer

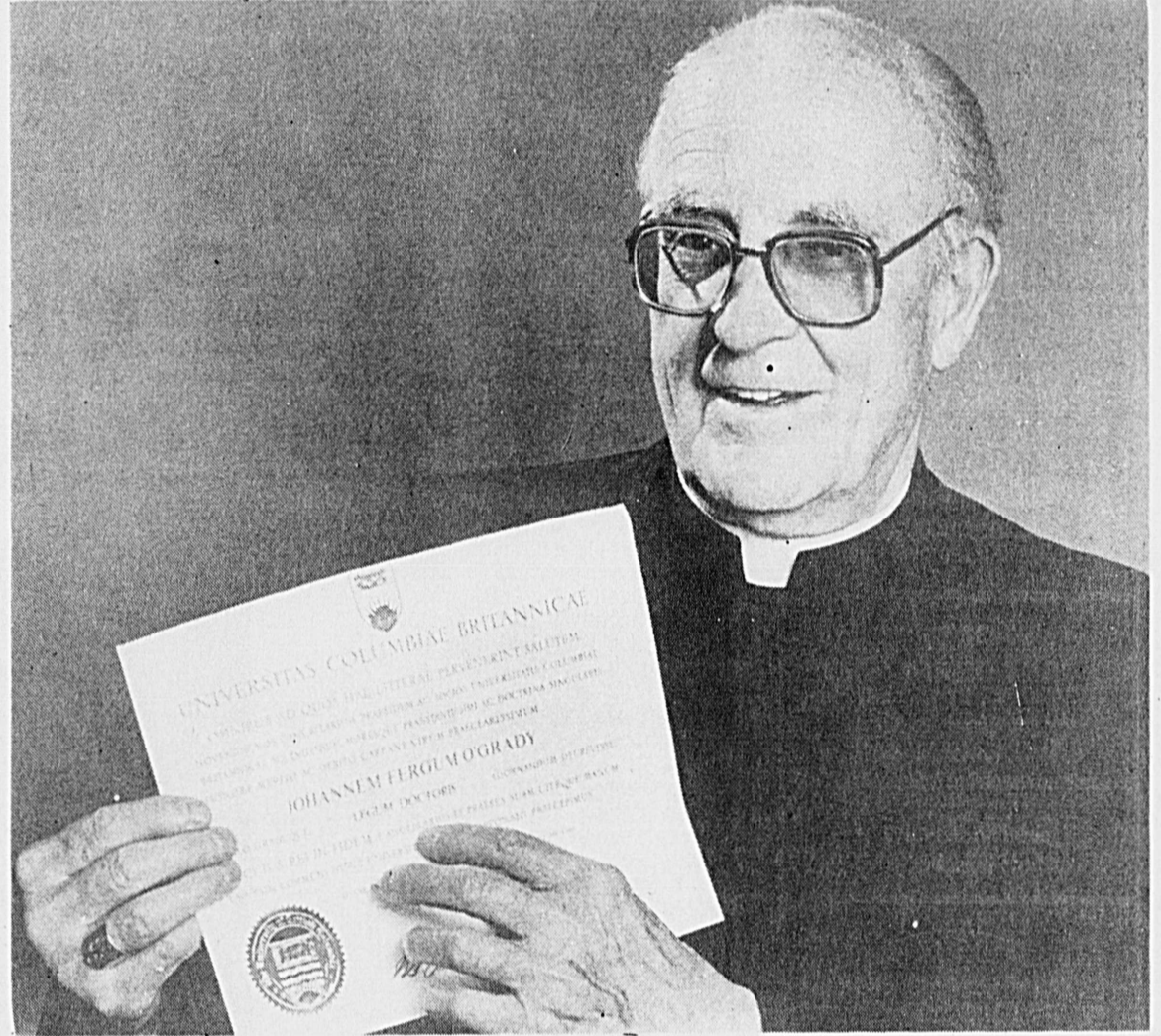
labour, the school was rebuilt within six months.

Earlier this year, Bishop O'Grady was one of seven people to receive honorary degrees during the three-day graduation ceremonies at UBC. A degree of doctor of laws was conferred on O'Grady for his religious work in the area, particularly with Native Indians.

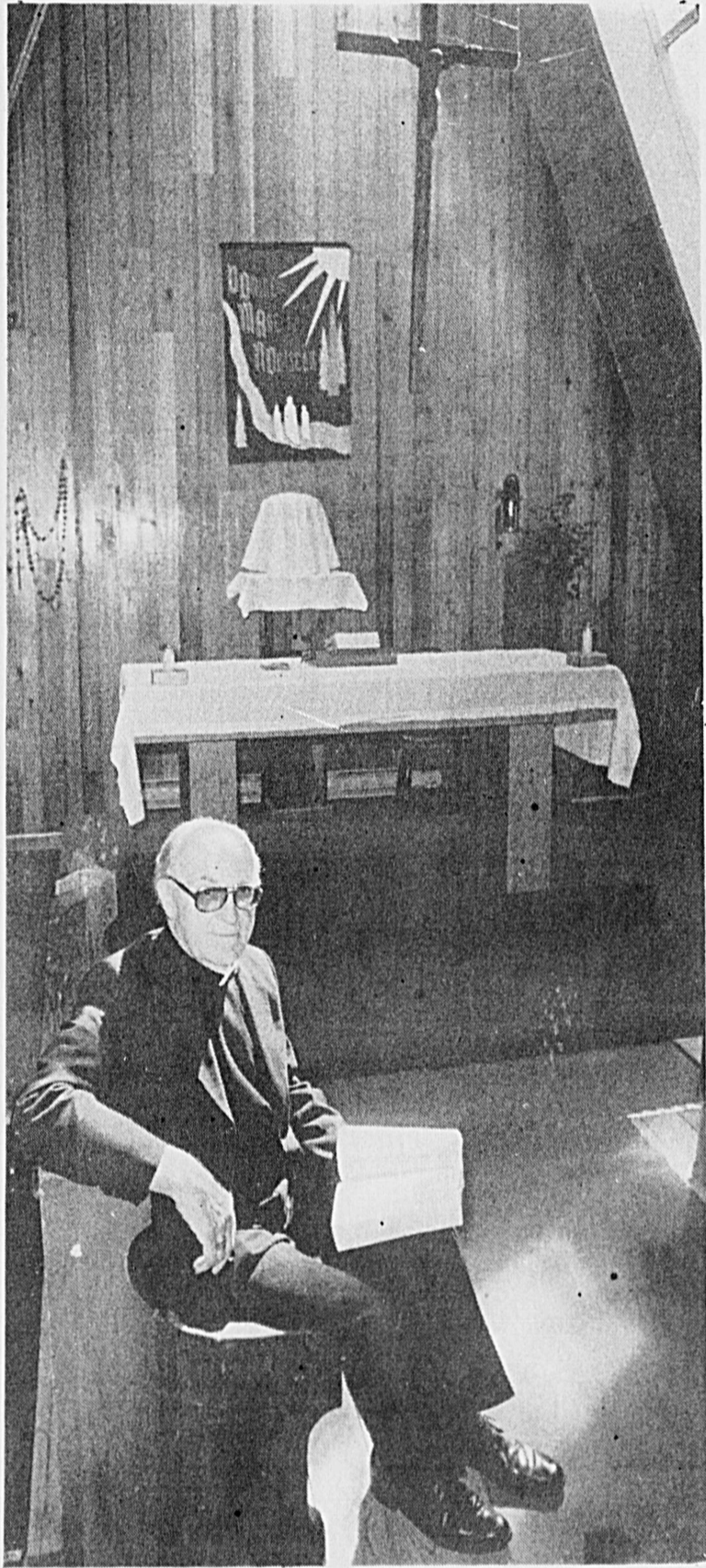
Immediate plans call for O'Grady

to take a year off. He's been invited to visit the 3,000 former volunteers scattered over six continents, so he has his work cut out for him.

Long-range plans will see O'Grady staying in Prince George, lending a helping hand where needed and enjoying our 'invigorating climate.' As he says, "I just keep on going."



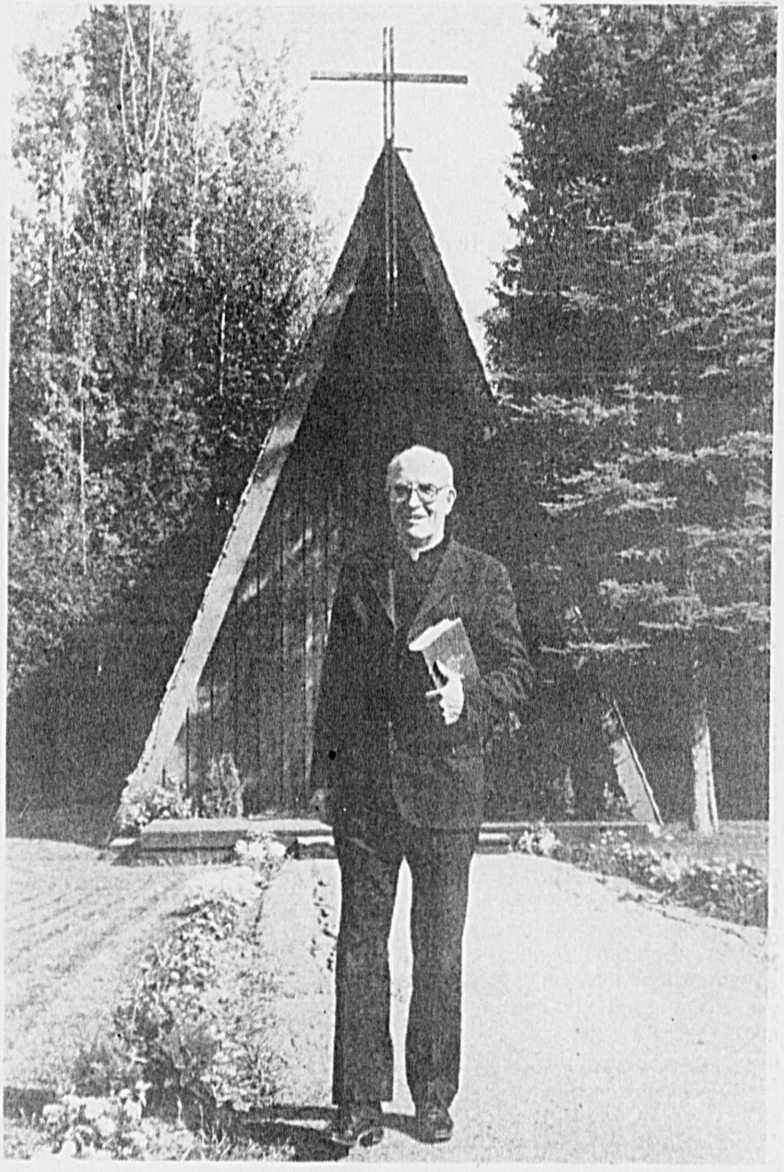
Bishop O'Grady proudly displays his doctor of laws degree conferred on him by the Univeristy of British Columbia for his religious work in this area, particularly with Native Indians.



Enjoying a moment of quiet reflection in Domano Chapel, Bishop O'Grady looks back on a career of more than fifty years, most of them devoted to the Prince George Diocese. A popular local figure, O'Grady will remain in this area.



A man who walks whenever the opportunity presents itself, Bishop O'Grady enjoys an early morning stroll to Domano Chapel. He finds our climate invigorating and looks forward to spending his retirement years in the area.



Bishop Fergus O'Grady pauses on his way to celebrate mass in Domano Chapel, located on Prince George College grounds. Building the college was the highlight of O'Grady's colorful career.

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