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**John Patrick Delaney, S.J. 1906–1956**

**I: The Early Years**

Raymond V. Gough

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# John Patrick Delaney, S.J., 1906-1956. I: The Early Years

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RAYMOND V. GOUGH

**I** wish I had known that John was going to die. I would have asked him to write his own obituary! He would have done it, too: busy as he was, somehow he would have found the time. With characteristic generosity and charity he would have stayed up nights to pound it out on his typewriter. His vivid, humorous style would have made it absorbing reading. His detractors would have discerned in it another instance of his arrogance, but his friends would have recognized the tongue-in-gaunt-cheek. Like the account he wrote of himself in 1947 when he was principal of the Ateneo de Manila: one of the first year high school students had to write a book report on the "Ateneo Book of Short Stories", lacking information about the author, he approached Fr. Delaney and asked for details of his life. The Principal gave the boy the following account of himself:

Name:	Delaney, John Patrick
Born:	March 6, 1492
Place:	Liverpool, England
Died:	Has been half dead since July 9, 1946
Place:	First hut, fourth quonset row, Ateneo de Manila. Still lingeringly dying on the second floor of the Administration Building, ADM.
Life History:	Charming baby, model boy, ideal young man, brilliant student, exceptionally talented postgraduate, eminent teacher, incomparable Dean, eloquent orator, masterly writer, superb lectu-

	rer, preeminent retreat director, and outstanding in each and every field of human endeavor.
Character:	Gentle, kind, patient, meek, mild, forgiving.
Favorite Motto:	The Dean is always right.
Favorite Sport:	Making boys work.
Favorite reading:	His own writings.
Favorite school:	University of the Philippines.

Despite his birthplace (he was always sensitive on the subject), John Patrick Delaney was as Irish as his name. If it is true that a good Irishman always enjoys a good fight, then John's last ten years were gloriously happy because it was a glorious fight! (And to think that his father was afraid to name him Patrick after himself! He had seen too many Patricks, he said, who were a disgrace to the name. So he compromised and called him John Patrick.) Though many of the issues for which he fought were still at stake at the time of his death, his death was anything but defeat for John and for the cause of Christ that he served so indefatigably. There are many monuments to his triumph: the Chapel of the Holy Sacrifice that dominates the campus of the University of the Philippines; the many "living temples" in the families of faculty members on the same campus, and countless other "living temples", former students, now leavening towns and barrios from Aparri to Jolo. Other monuments are the vocations to convent and priesthood that he inspired and encouraged. "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it will remain nothing more than a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it will bring forth much fruit." Other hands are now reaping the rich harvest that Father Delaney sowed.

He lived only forty-nine years, but it was a full and a happy life by any standard, but especially by the standard of Christ. He was constantly preaching the poverty and simplicity of Christ as the only way to a happy life. If there had been a better way to find happiness in this life, Christ, who led the perfect life, would have shown us that way. When John spoke of poverty and simplicity he was speaking not from theory alone but from experience as well.

decipher his letters. He had to get one of John's sisters to read them to him. He blessed the day John started to type his letters.

If Sister Gilberta could have seen his writing in later years, she would have wanted her medal back!

John graduated from St. Ignatius in June 1918 at the age of twelve and was first in his class in all subjects. But the Principal, Sister Evarista, was reluctant to give all the medals to one student, so John had to be content with the gold medal for general excellence and a book prize, a biography of Saint Ignatius.

The following September John "moved across the street" to Regis. Among the Jesuit Scholastics teaching at Regis at the time were Mr. Thomas Gallagher, Mr. Hugh McLaughlin and Mr. Edmund—later Bishop—Rice. Hugh McLaughlin became his life-long friend; and he and Thomas Gallagher, as priests, were again with John during his regency in the Philippines. Of this period of John's life his family remembers that

he worked after school hours, and on Saturdays and during vacations. He did not work at his studies though. He came from school, his books tied together by a leather strap, and on arriving at home, he would throw them on the top of the kitchen shelf. He did not touch them again until he took them off the shelf on his way to school the next morning.

Mr. Rice, who taught him in his second and third years, and who was his "class teacher" in fourth year, "was furious with John because John just wouldn't work." Recalling John's school days later, Bishop Rice ruefully admitted to the family that he was well aware that John did all his homework in class, but try as he would, he could never catch John inattentive or unprepared. John's high school record is eloquent testimony to Bishop Rice's feeling of frustration: his final average for each of the four years was: 90, 92, 96, and 95.

During all these years John was exceptionally blessed by God in the atmosphere of faith and love that surrounded him and his brother and sisters in the home. Later in his

Cana conferences and family retreats he could speak with eloquence and conviction of the joys of the "simple life": he was talking not only of Nazareth but of his own family as well. He was not oblivious to the love and devotion of his parents, and appreciated how hard they worked. His mother had only an elementary school education in Ireland and a few years training as a dressmaker in England: she made all the clothes of her children. His father had gone only to the "fifth book" before he had to go out and work as a farmer. While in Liverpool (where he went to get away from farming, which he hated) he started going to night school and continued this for years in New York City until he completed his elementary and high school courses, and took many courses on the college level to prepare for civil service exams. His children were all proud of his grand success. John expressed what they all felt when he dedicated "We Offer Thee"—"To PJD who should have been a scholar but by very need became with dignity ditchdigger, longshoreman, street-car conductor, milkman, gardener, and lastly a scourge of truants."

"We were poor", his sister May remembers,

but we had a very happy childhood. We were given a richness that money cannot buy. We learned to share what little we had with each other, we learned to appreciate little things, and we learned to be thoughtful of others. Just for example: I can never forget our birthdays, not because of birthday parties, not because of gifts, but because the day was made so important. That day you did not have to do any chores; a pie or cake was baked for you and you received a penny for each year of your age. To this day I can hear different members of the family exclaiming: "This is my birthday, I don't have to do any work today!"

We were all assigned tasks to do. In this John was always very willing: he scrubbed floors, and he would hang out and bring in the wash, iron flat pieces, and even hem towels, handkerchiefs and napkins. This last task John loved to do; he learned to use the sewing machine in a tailor shop where his brother, Tom, ran errands.

Tom and John were always planning programs. They'd write plays and act them. Mom and Pop's wedding anniversary was always an occasion for a program. One year, I remember in particular, we put on a play. Of course we girls only did what we were told. They were the playwrights, the directors, the prop men et al. But everyone of us had some part. And the boys bought two little boxes of chocolates

( $\frac{1}{4}$  pound in each)—one for Mom and the other for Pop... All our entertainment was in our home and everything we did we did as a family group.

Things were sometimes very tough but we seemed to know and understand. We wouldn't ask for something we would like to have for we knew that Mom and Pop were giving all they could. I won't say we did not want things and that we did not crave what other children had—naturally we did, but it did not make us unhappy, except maybe momentarily.

We were given a priceless gift of faith, a faith that is bestowed by God on the Irish people—a faith I could never describe in words. No matter what happened, God would take care of it. God had the answer to all our problems. That was the every-day attitude of Mom and Pop. Mom was always saying the Rosary, and Pop always said that Mom was a saint and that she tried hard to make him one, too. He used to say that when he was courting her he had to follow her to Church if he wanted to make a date with her.

When John was a boy, Saturday night was a very important night in the family's life. Every Saturday night was spent in preparation for Sunday's Mass. All the baths had to be taken, all Sunday clothes had to be laid out (anything new was always worn to Church first), shoes had to be polished, and when everything was in readiness Mom would make tea and everyone sat around the kitchen table drinking tea and eating coffee-ring. So that Saturday night took on a very festive air and left a lasting impression—so much so that in later years when the trend was for people to go out celebrating or dating on Saturday night, members of John's family could never do so. That would be almost a sacrilege!

#### NOVICE-JUNIOR-PHILOSOPHER

John graduated from Regis in January 1922, and on February 1st, a month before his sixteenth birthday, he entered the Society of Jesus at St. Andrew-on-Hudson. For years John had never had any doubts as to what he wanted to be. His decision was very simple and very definite. One day he was talking the matter over with his mother. She was telling him of the long years of study he would have to undergo as a Jesuit (no small consideration for one whose high school days had not been overburdened by study!) pointing out the more difficult features of Jesuit life. His reply was gentle, but unhesitating: "A Jesuit or nothing, Mom."

"When John entered the Society of Jesus," May recalls, how humbly and how obediently his parents gave him to God. They made his entering so much easier for him that way. And all through the years how they appreciated the blessing God had given them. Not only his life, but all our lives became so much richer. Our whole life became centered around John's life.

A month after his entrance, on March 6th, John's mother and sister, May, went to St. Andrews to visit him on his birthday. They took the train to Poughkeepsie and a taxi from the station to the Novitiate. They asked for John and were told to wait in the parlor. John's mother was very hurt—to think that John knew she was coming and yet was not there to meet her. That was her first lesson in Jesuit life!

Mrs. Delaney was one of the charter members of the Jesuit Mothers' Guild which was organized during John's sojourn at St. Andrews. Since the meetings of the Guild were held at Xavier the mothers met many priests and scholastics. In her letters Mrs. Delaney would tell John of these meetings and she had the habit of using the word "lovely" in describing the Jesuits she met. In his letters John used to kid her and ask to be remembered to "lovely Mr. So and So", and to "lovely Fr. So and So". After a while he began signing his own letters "Your lovely son", and he continued to sign himself that way for years. John was a very faithful correspondent all throughout the course of studies and his letters reveal a side of his personality that few would suspect, even among his closest friends in the Society. They are interesting, of course, and humorous, but above all they are warm and affectionate—some might even say, sentimental! I knew John quite well, few Jesuits knew him better; certainly I was more closely associated with him than any other during the last ten years of his life—but "sentimental" would be the last word I could think of in describing John. He was sincerely, personally interested in anyone who came to him with problems, he was patient and understanding and sympathetic—but definitely not sentimental! Sentimentality connotes softness—and John was anything but soft. He was all

"fire and steel", as *America* eulogized him so aptly. And yet fire is warm and steel is strong—and John's love was just that. Strong and warm and deep was his love, so deep that some might not discern it and think him cold and unfeeling. He effectively cloaked his affections, only rarely did the veil slip and reveal the depths of his love. One such occasion was his return to the Philippines in 1945; to the friends he was leaving he opened his heart:

It's a strange thing being a priest—you give your whole heart to all the people you know and all the work you do—and yet keep your whole heart for the next person and the next job. You'll always have my heart, my whole heart. You'll be in my Mass every day. As I've often told you, every time I say *Dominus Vobiscum*, I'll be sending a priestly greeting and Christ's own blessing to everyone of you. And in return, every once in a while, will you answer some priest's *Dominus Vobiscum* with a heartfelt *Et Cum Spiritu Tuo . . . and . . . Father Delaney*.

But such expressions of emotion were rare, except in his letters home. In them he always retained a certain boyish freshness and charm. He made no attempt to conceal his tender sentiments for those he loved.

But to get back to "lovely" Brother Delaney where we left him at St. Andrews. He pronounced his first vows in the Society on July 31, 1924, though he had become a "skull-cap" Junior the previous February. Father Walter Hyland, who was a year ahead of John in the Juniorate, remembers the comment of one of John's classmates, that shortly after he joined the class at mid-year he was "*facile princeps*" in studies and classwork. That Christmas he wrote his first Christmas poem to his mother whose birthday was Christmas day. It was as a Junior that John began a custom that he was to continue till the end of his course of studies: a special Christmas present each year for the family: in the earlier years some Christmas verses, during the Woodstock years bantering and affectionate short stories and dialogues in which every member of the family makes an appearance. On Christmas John's "spirit" visits home!

In the summer of 1925, John left St. Andrews for Mt. St. Michael's in Hillyard, Spokane, Washington, where he



was to study philosophy. His three years there were very happy ones, as his letters home attest. Of this period of his life as a Scholastic, Father Walter Hyland, who was with him in Hillyard also, says:

Father Delaney was a most competent classical scholar (at St. Andrews). I guess he was even better as a philosopher. He had a great ability of being able to simplify complex and difficult metaphysics. He wrote a set of philosophy notes that were very highly regarded at Mt. St. Michael's philosophate. He had the first year public defense in philosophy. As a philosopher he was a very effective debater and logician . . . he had already formed a simple and very readable English style.

Father Hyland recalls a story that John used to tell of his catechetical work at this time. In his catechism classes there was a negro woman who told John: "My brother is leading a loose life. I told him to be careful, and to remember the scripture text: 'What is loose on earth, will also be loose in heaven.'"

While at Hillyard John wrote a booklet on the Jesuit Brothers' life which was published by the California Province in 1928, and during the 1927 Christmas holidays the philosophers staged a play he had written earlier that year.

Shortly after the start of his third year philosophy, the possibility of his going to the Philippine Mission came up. Later he told his family that he had always wanted to be a missionary, but for obvious reasons he had been reluctant to mention the matter to his mother. When towards Christmas of 1927 he felt that he finally had to tell her that "he might go to the Philippines" she was just recovering from a broken hip: it had been a long and very painful sickness which had been aggravated by a severe nervous breakdown. She had found the fact of his being on the West Coast particularly hard during the time of her illness and was looking forward to his return to the East for his regency. John was well aware of all this and so he awaited her reaction to the news with considerable anxiety. But he had underestimated her faith and heroism. His answer (dated December 26, 1927) is quoted at length because it tells us

not only of the heroic generosity of a mother: it tells us no less about the son.

Dear Mama:

I was just beginning to clean up my room this morning (the day after Christmas) when your letter came. My room is one awful mess after the last few days—but before I do anything else I must answer your letter.

Mama dear, I have often said you were a Saint and now I'm saying it again—and I'm sure that the Lord will agree with me in that. You don't know how happy it makes me feel to know that you are getting on so well—walking without crutches, getting to Mass and Communion, making your novenas and all. That's wonderful. Patience—a little while longer—and you'll be perfectly well....

And now let's have a little chat about the Philippines! No—I never asked you to pray that I'd be sent there—but I well remember the letter in which you made the remark you refer to. I enjoyed it immensely at the time and I have laughed over it to myself many times since. It was the kind of remark that Mary might have made to Jesus in all playfulness. But Mama, I'm so happy and proud of you as I read the next few lines of your letter. Now do you wonder that I say, you are a Saint? I have read letters of different Saints but I have never read anything more beautiful or more heroic than those few lines of yours: 'At Benediction I promised Our Lord that I'd pray for you to go anywhere He'd be pleased to send you! I have done so and I have always prayed for a priest and at least one sister in the family and always will!' Mama, that's beautiful—that's heroic. Later on, I'm going to use that in sermons and retreats. When I am looking for an example of conformity to God's will and heroic generosity to God, I'm not going to use an example from the lives of the Saints—but I'm going to tell the people of a Mother I know—after months and months of terrible suffering and pain, after a terrible nervous breakdown—writing to her boy a few thousand miles away, and when every fibre of her mother's being was longing for that boy to return and live near her—to help her in her suffering—praying to God to send that boy, if He willed, six or seven more thousand miles away! Mama, I'm so happy and so proud of *My Mother* that my hand shakes as I write this! May God reward you generously for your generosity! I feel ashamed of myself when I think of you! Mama, I have received many gifts this X'mas—Aunt Maggie sent me a splendid half-dozen pair of silk socks—your gloves are beautiful—Helen's scarf is a dream—Papa's beads—Tom's present is on the way—I have received presents here—but the best present of all and the one that makes me feel happiest is the few lines of your letter that I have just quoted.

Thank you for making me so happy. Very, very few—even of the Mothers who offer their boys to Jesus—offer them with such a full-hearted, generous surrender.

But am I going to the Philippines in June? I don't know. I may and I may not. I have always more or less avoided the topic with you (I'm ashamed now— when I've known how heroic you are) because the thing that will make going to the Philippines hard is the thought of your disappointment when you are expecting me home. But after what you have told me in your last letter, even that should not be so hard.... But whether I go eventually to the Philippines or not, keep up that beautiful prayer and God will bless you for it and we'll both be doing His will. Now do you see the way I like to confide in you—you are still and ever will be my Mama—and to my Mama, I want to come with all my secrets, all my hopes and fears—as I wrote you in that first Christmas poem I ever sent you.

And again thank you for such a prayer and such a letter. It has made me very happy...

Thank you again and again for making me so happy today.... Love to all and the very best of love and lots of prayers. God bless you, Mama dear!

Your loving son  
John

When definite word of his missionary assignment came, his mother wrote: "When we gave you to God we gave you completely. If He wants you in the Philippines, that's where we want you, too."

#### MISSIONARY: TEACHER AND AUTHOR

John used to jokingly refer to himself as a "missionary-by-mistake," and quite often told this story in later years. It seems the Ateneo de Manila had asked for a chemistry teacher, and Father John B. Delaney, a priest, then teaching chemistry in one of the schools of the province, had been selected to go the Philippines in answer to the Ateneo's request. By a "clerical error" the name of Mr. John P. Delaney, who neither then nor later ever betrayed the slightest interest in chemistry, found its way onto the list of *Mission mittendi*. The warm welcome non-chemist Delaney received at the Ateneo upon his arrival was due entirely to atmospheric conditions, somewhat charged by a disappointed

Dean! But for John, and the Ateneo, and the Philippines, it soon became apparent that the "clerical error" was a *felix culpa*.

John was assigned to teach first year high at the Ateneo in the old Walled City. Regency afforded him a broad field for his talents: he was Moderator of the St. Stanislaus Sodality for day students, assistant Moderator of the *Ateneo Monthly*, Moderator of the Sanctuary Society; he trained boys for dramatics and elocution contests; but above all he was extraordinarily successful and effective as a teacher. His "boys" still talk about him as the clearest and most interesting teacher they ever had.

He had not been in the Ateneo classrooms long before he realized that the Stateside textbooks used, especially in English, were impractical, and that there was a real need for texts written especially for Filipino high school students. With characteristic initiative and energy he started work on the textbooks himself, writing the lessons, testing them in his own classes, following substantially the traditional *Ratio studiorum* methods—precepts, models, exercises, corrections. At the end of his first year regency he was given the chance to move up to a higher class but requested to be allowed to continue in first year so that he could continue working and experimenting on his English course. The end products of this work were *First Year English*—a combination grammar and exercise book—and *The Ateneo Book of Short Stories*—a collection of stories written by himself for use in conjunction with *First Year English* and designed primarily to increase English vocabulary and facility with the English idiom. These two books were published by the Ateneo during his regency, and were re-issued shortly after World War II. They are in use in Jesuit and other Catholic schools throughout the Philippines today. Perhaps only the teacher who has used them in teaching Filipino first year students can appreciate how uncannily good they are. One Jesuit priest who has used them over the years with a great number of classes (college classes, among them!) has said that *First Year English* more than anything else Father



Delaney wrote shows how extraordinary his gifts as a teacher were. These two books also show his incredible capacity for work, for it must be remembered that they were written while he was teaching English, Latin, History, and Algebra five periods a day, besides his extra-curricular activities, and besides doing his share of prefecting the boarders. Father Hugh McLaughlin (his old friend from Regis days) told John's family how he spent one sweltering summer vacation in Manila trying to meet the deadline for the printer: it was so hot he had to keep a fan blowing on the paper to keep it dry.

When John's regency was over he had the missions in his blood. He had countless stories to tell his family and it was obvious to them that he had left his heart in the Philippines. One story he enjoyed telling was about a boy in his class whom he scolded for some misdemeanor or other. As he went on with the lesson, he noticed the boy writing furiously at his desk. He slipped quietly down the aisle and picked up the boy's paper; on it he read "Father John P. Delaney go to hell; Father John P. Delaney go to hell; Father John P. Delaney go to hell . . ." ad infinitum! John never said a word but put the paper in his soutana pocket and continued the lesson. The boy came to him in tears after class; John felt he had already received his punishment. He confided to his family that he had become so attached to his boys that when the time came for departure he could not trust himself to say good-bye, so he slipped quietly on board ship early and hid in his cabin until the ship sailed.

It is not hard to imagine the pride of his mother and father when he gave them a copy of his two English books. The *First Year English* was dedicated:

To a "Model"  
In my textbook of life  
Whom I have never wearied of "imitating"  
My Mother

and the *Short Stories* bore the simple dedication:

To My Father

## WOODSTOCK YEARS

After the feverish activity of the past three years it must have been quite difficult to adjust himself to the routine of the theologate: Woodstock was "Intramuros" as the Ateneo had never seen! But he used his leisure time profitably. He read everything on the Mass that he could lay his hands on and he wrote: he wrote letters, plays, poems, detective stories, and articles and stories for *Jesuit Missions* and *The Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. Father Austin Dowd recalls that during Theology John wrote two books and laments the fact that they were never published.

They were boys' books...one of them was about the perennial problem of labor and management, and brought in some very imaginative means to bring peace to those who seem to be always at loggerheads over the vexing problems of Capital and Labor. Personally I wanted to see those books published. I never was able to find out why they were not. Perhaps they were turned down by the censors, perhaps they were never submitted to the censors. Father Delaney did not think much of them, apparently for him they were just exercises to give him some mental relaxation after a hard bout with the theological authors. I would like to make a plea, if they are still in existence, to have them re-examined. They would be a sort of fitting monument to a wonderful man.

Perhaps the fate of the two books in question can be explained by a reference in one of John's letters from Woodstock to his mother:

I don't think I told you that Father Rice was here a week or so ago. He'd been over at Georgetown for some time, getting ready to go off on some new mission; and Georgetown not being far off, he decided to come over and see the young kid he used to have in class.... He was trying to tear my heart away from the Philippines and talk me into his new Mission. He'll have to do some tall talking to succeed...and that reminds me that Father Rice stole my two books. The Rector had called for them some time ago and I took them down to him. Then when I knew that Father Rice was coming over, I borrowed them from the Rector's room to show to Father Rice, and he wouldn't give them back. He claims that he'll probably have to write an English book for his own school sometime in the course of the next few years, and it will help to have mine on hand to follow it. I argued with him, but it was all a waste of time, he **TOOK THEM**, and that was the end of it! So in a short time, they'll travel to the other side of the world.

John's first Christmas letter from Woodstock to his mother is a gem: it is playful and tender, he is still her boy. Success as a scholar, a teacher, an author has not changed him; he still confides in his mother all his secrets, all his hopes and fears. He wistfully remembers the past Christmas in the Philippines and impatiently looks forward to the day "when with His grace I'll be able to hold Him in my own hands". The letter is well worth reproducing in length:

Dear Mama:

[red] I'm sure that you will pardon me if this is not all decorated with Christmas pictures and paintings and drawings and holly and wreaths and laurel and red and green and blue and pink paper. The truth is that I can't find any pictures to paste on, and I must admit without any shame that I'm not much of an artist; and if I painted anything on this, I would have to write another letter to describe the pictures. You might mistake a wreath for an auto tire; a leaf for an eagle; a tree for a house; and my picture of Santa Claus might pass in any art exhibit for a painting of a ruined cathedral. I'll get color into the letter by changing the color of the ribbon every two or three minutes; and your imagination can supply all the pictures you want. Then if you really still insist on pictures, I'll do a little bit of the letter in handwriting and you'll think that every letter is supposed to be a bird of some kind or other. Then when I have finished I'll put the letter on the wall, get a few yards off and throw an ink bottle at the whole thing. If that doesn't put a few beautiful pictures on, then I'll have to give up.

[black] It's more like a real Christmas this year, with the cold weather—the snow is still missing—and the laurel and the decorations and the busy preparations, than it has seemed for the last three years. Of course we "old" men, we theologians, leave most of the decorating to the young "kids" on the other side of the house, the philosophers. We leave them all the big work and we just take care of our side of the house. That's enough. We all went out on the coldest day we had a few weeks ago and picked laurel until we were frozen—almost seventy-five bags of it; and wonder of wonders, we strung all the seventy-five bags into wreaths and streamers in a day, in one short day—while the poor philosophers have been at it every day for the last few weeks. In the Philippines we had to do all our decorations with paper on the day of Christmas when we were all absolutely worn out after the strenuous months of class; this year we may be tired but not half as tired as at Christmas time in the Philippines; and the sight of the green decorations is going to be a real pleasure. I have no kids to train for midnight Mass as I had last year and the year before; and won't go out on a tour of three or four convents in the afternoon



for benediction. I'll miss all that just a little; but there will be enough to make up for it. Christmas week is beyond all doubt the finest week of the whole year in this little house; and I'm going to get the full fun out of the whole week; of course there will be a little work to do until I get my play out of the way. We have been practicing steadily every day now for a long time, even arranging special picnics on Thursday, where we practice after dinner. Now for all the stage work and the final rehearsals and the costumes and what not! There are thousands of things to be looked after; with lots of generous help from various fellows around, it won't be so bad. The play will come off on the evening of the 28th, and you can say a prayer that it will go over big. I really think it ought to, considering the ability of the actors I have in it. Some of them ought to be little riots in themselves. But I'll be able to tell you more about it when it's all over. My Christmas vacations really will begin on the morning of the 29th.

[red] It's time to change the ribbon—just for the sake of decorations; by the way there's lots of fuzzy dust scattered around my floor, that would look very much like snow to anybody with a good imagination. Do you want me to spread some of it over this letter? No? Oh, all right, I just wanted to decorate.

[black] Another change!...

[red] Time for another change of scenery, isn't it? Talking of the kids reminds me of what a glorious evening I had last night reading the mail that came in from the kids—between thirty and forty letters, and there are more coming in a few days, I'm sure. I had thought I was just catching up on my mail, but now I'll have to start all over again. [black] But I don't mind that. I get some wonderful letters, and it's worth the little trouble it takes to answer them. Really there are none who have taught here in the States who get so much mail from their kids; and there's the added thrill of knowing that the kids had to remember to write more than a month ago. It's very pleasant to have them all writing that way and telling me about communions they offer up for me, and recalling old incidents that I had almost forgotten and some that I can't forget. I had one letter from one of the new Novices over there whom I used to teach how to recite speeches and elocution pieces and so forth. I'll have to hire a secretary to answer this Christmas mail. Of course I did not write to them all for Christmas, but I did write a letter to each of my classes to be passed around among the kids. They all understand that I can't answer them all immediately. Of course they want answers, but they tell me not to mind answering if I am too busy. Is it any wonder that I got so much fun out of teaching instead of studying? [red] While we work on the decorations and so forth, I find myself hoping that some Christmas day some time in the dim dim future, I'll have a chance to be home for Christmas and decorate the place and dress up

a Christmas tree and make the whole place look and feel like Bethlehem must have looked and felt years and years ago. And then sit down to Christmas dinner at home! What a dream! But keep on waiting and some day it may come true. [black] But anyhow it's not my presence that would make the place more like Bethlehem. You'll have the Infant of Bethlehem with you and He'll have His Christmas blessings scattered all over the house; and after Midnight Mass He'll be in all hearts and He'll give you more than a taste of that joy and happiness and good will that comes only on Christmas Day and during the whole of Christmas time. Peace! Friendliness! Love! Efforts to make everybody else happy! Happiness, Joy, that's Christmas, I'm sure, at 265—94th Street! God bless you all and make it always Christmas Day in your hearts.

[red] Have you the Delaney Family Christmas story yet? It's not every family that has a story written about them for Christmas. If you want some more fine Christmas reading, take out that old volume of "The Other Wise Man and other Christmas Stories" the typewritten one of last year and read especially the Other Wise Man, the Gift of the Magi and the King's Cradle. They are three beautiful stories that make you feel like Christmas as soon as you read them. You ought to read the Other Wise Man for the whole family on Christmas Eve. I told my kids last year when we were finishing that, that they ought to take it out every Christmas Eve and read it. I'll probably do that myself instead of going to bed before Midnight Mass. Then when you finish those, you'll find two other Christmas stories in my own story book, "The End of the Road" and a "Legend of Christmas". I think you'll like them....

[black] By the way, did you prefer the story to a poem? Maybe I should have written both, but honestly I've been busy. I did write a poem some time ago on the priesthood that I intend to send to a friend of mine who will be ordained up in Canada next year.

[red] AND NOW A MERRY MERRY CHRISTMAS! For the last ten years I have been looking for a better way of saying that but I have not been able to find one. The oldest way and the simplest way seems to be the best, doesn't it? Especially when you know that my whole heart is behind those simple little words. I don't think that the little infant King would use any other words Himself when He says "Merry Christmas". That's what He must have tried to say to the Blessed Mother when she bent over Him in the crib on that first Christmas morning; and I know that's what He'll be saying to another wonderful little Mother, when she bends over His crib this Christmas night, 1931; and when she walks up to the altar to receive her King into her own beautiful heart. May He bless you, Mama dear, with the very best of all His blessings; and may He make the heart of My Mother as happy and full of peace and joy as He made the heart

of His own Mother on that first Christmas night so many years ago. I know how happy I'd make you if I had the power; and I know that He has the power to make you far more happy than I ever could. What better than to ask Him to make you as happy as He possibly can??? And I know He'll do it!

And then, Mama dearest, when you are talking to Him at Holy Communion, ask Him to bless me, and to hurry up the day when with His grace I'll be able to hold Him in my own hands, and to make me a little bit worthy of the life to which He has called me, and to make me holy and generous and eager and able to do a lot of work for Him.

And with a Merry Christmas—A Happy Birthday. It's nice to be able to think of Christ's birthday as my mother's birthday; and to feel that in the same way in which I can say Happy Birthday to Jesus, I can say Happy Birthday to you. God bless your birthday and make you happier and happier with each coming birthday.

[black] That's all I'll write, but it's not all I'll pray for you. Of course you know whose is my Communion at Midnight Mass; and for whom is my first Christmas Day prayer. In your Christmas Day prayers pray for me, for all of us down here, for all your Jesuit friends, for all those working in the Philippines, and for all my boys in the Philippines.

A MERRY, MERRY, MERRY CHRISTMAS

from

Your LOVELY son,

John

How abundantly that mother's prayer was answered "to make me holy and generous and eager and able to do a lot of work for Him", beyond her—or his—fondest dreams!

Three happy years sped by with Brooklyn periodically invading Woodstock in the person of the Cannon-Cervini-Delaney families. John wrote a thirteen-page play entitled "The Jesuit Fathers by their Jesuit Sons", memorializing these riotous visits. Of course the most memorable visit was in June 1934 for John's ordination. Just before the family left Brooklyn on Thursday, June 21, a letter arrived in the morning mail from John. He poured out his heart in that letter and told his mother and father how much he owed them and how he wanted them to know how grateful he was. In the excitement of the day the letter was mislaid and never

found. But a poem that he wrote for his mother has been saved:

## MOTHER OF A PRIEST

"Only the Maker of Priests  
Knows all that must mingle  
In the making of a priest . . ."

"O Mother, can't I be a priest some day?"  
With boyish, wistful pride I spoke . . . and mild surprise  
For the sad, glad way  
You looked at me, . . . not wise  
Enough to pierce the prayer in your answering nod  
And soft reply—"Some day, please God!"

"And can't I sail to far-off pagan lands?"  
I asked, and dreamed a boy's romance of martyr's blood  
And mangled hands  
Nor did I see the flood  
Of fear and hope that dimmed your eyes, the burning fires  
Of your soft reply: "If God desires!"

For how was I, a boy, to know the fears  
And hopes and joys of a mother's life-long cherished prayer,  
And anguished tears  
Of parted love, the care,  
The sorrow and the pain, that are a Mother's part  
In moulding a Priestly heart?  
But, Mother, God has known and I have learned  
At last the hidden glory of your offering!  
This day for which you yearned,  
May angels sing  
Within your heart, and Christ smile "yes" to your every whim,  
When I come to you . . . with Him.

On ordination day John's mother told him that she always thought she would spend all the night before ordination praying—but that night, try as she would, she could not pray—all she could do was to keep saying over and over again "Thank God, Thank God." John used that story many times in retreats as an example of perfect prayer.

For his First Mass John wore a set of vestments that had been designed by Fr. Hugh McLaughlin and made by Maryknoll nuns in China. Of course the alb and linens had all

been made by John's Mother. John's sister recalls that Fr. MacLaughlin "insisted" on preaching at John's First Solemn High Mass, though John himself had not asked him: he was afraid that the sermon would be too flattering!

John's last year at Woodstock passed quickly. For the summer before Tertianship he was assigned to the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. Tertianship had special joy for the family for he had several assignments in New York City and was able to pay an occasional visit home. But he never wanted any fuss made and insisted on eating at the kitchen table rather than in the dining room. It was during this year that his mother's health began to fail. Now ten years after the accident her hip gave her trouble again and she was confined to bed. John spent as much time with her as his assignments permitted. For the Feast of the Sacred Heart he had to give a talk to the school children of St. Ignatius. He was at home the day before and kept practicing "My dear children, My very dear children." This he said over and over again. When he left his mother claimed that he prepared his sermon while he was doing all that clowning; and she was right.