

Fr. Growney To Celebrate 25 Years on Air

Broadcast Increased Attendance, He Says

The Rev. Francis A. Growney, first priest of the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo to sense the value of religious radio broadcasting, will celebrate tomorrow the 25th anniversary of a radio ministry credited with drawing hundreds of persons into the Catholic faith and contributing to the steady decline in religious prejudice.

Father Growney, pastor of St. William's Church and founder of the Shrine of the Miraculous Medal, Winchester, said yesterday that in his experience, the use of radio has been "very great in the spreading of the gospel and breaking down prejudice."

"I can trace the beginning of hundreds of conversions to religion and the church to the radio," he said. "Thousands of people are making novenas, coming to church and praying because they first heard the broadcast of a religious service on the air."

Attendance Multiplied

"When I first came to Winchester I preached to a few hundred people. Today I am preaching to thousands. One of the first reasons is that many of these people heard the beauty of his faith coming to him into his home through the radio."

One of the best known and ablest preachers of the diocese, Father Growney began broadcasting in 1925 when the radio was still in its infancy, just emerged from the ear-phone stage into receiving sets.

A conviction that radio offered the church a great opportunity to expand the field of religion led Father Growney, then only 27 years old and an ordained priest for only three years, to ask the late Bishop William Turner's permission to broadcast a series of sermons. This was the first time in the history of the diocese the voice of a priest was heard on the air.

In 1927, Father Growney put on the air for the first time in the country the double pulpit sermon. This was a form of preaching in which a priest in one pulpit explained some teachings of the church and answered questions proposed by another priest from a second pulpit.

The pioneer radio priest made his debut over a national network in 1930. With the late Graham McNamee, he broadcast the 250th anniversary of the discovery of Niagara Falls by the Franciscan monk, Father Louis Hennepin.

His Soldiers' Novena

In 1941, Father Growney placed on the air his Soldiers' Novena and continued it throughout the war. The enrolling of more than 50,000 servicemen in the novena and the corresponding with men in all theaters of the war were described by the priest as "the most inspiring and satisfying experience in my whole radio career."

During the Eucharistic Congress in 1947, when the diocese celebrated its 100th anniversary, Father Growney was chairman of the radio committee and organized more than 80 radio programs of the congress, some of which were broadcast over national and state hook-ups.

The broadcast at noon tomorrow of a Holy Year novena from the Winchester shrine will be over Station WGR—the same station over which Father Growney made his radio debut 20 years ago.

Priest Has Broadcast A Quarter Century



FR. FRANCIS A. GROWNEY