

McGRATH, MICHAEL JOSEPH (1882 - 1961), Archbishop of Cardiff;

Name: Michael Joseph Mcgrath
Date of birth: 1882
Date of death: 1961
Gender: Male
Occupation: Archbishop
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Daniel Joseph Mullins

Born in Kilkenny in Ireland, 24 March 1882. He was educated at the local Christian Brothers' School and went from there to Rockwell College, Co. Tipperary. While there, his interest in the Irish language grew and he went on to gain a B.A. degree in the language in the National University of Ireland. Several years later, the same university awarded him the honorary degree of D.Litt. After graduation, Michael McGrath decided to become a priest. He entered St. John's College, Waterford, and on 12 July 1908, he was ordained a priest for the Catholic diocese of Clifton. He spent a number of years in that diocese, first as a curate at the cathedral in Clifton and then as parish priest at Fishponds, and at the Church of St. Nicholas in Bristol. His health at that period was uncertain and in 1918 it so deteriorated that he had to resign this parish and seek a period of leave of absence to try to regain full health. In 1921, his known interest in the Celtic languages led **Bishop Francis Mostyn** to invite him to work in Menevia diocese. This he accepted and went to serve at Flint and later at Bangor. In 1928, he was transferred to Aberystwyth, as parish priest and Rector of the small Catholic college in that town. During his stay in Aberystwyth, Michael McGrath followed courses in Welsh literature given by **Thomas Gwynn Jones** in the university college, and they became close lifelong friends. In 1935, on the death of Bishop Francis Vaughan, Michael McGrath was appointed Bishop of Menevia. He was consecrated on 24 September of that year. On the death of **Archbishop Mostyn**, the man who had invited him to come to Wales, Bishop McGrath was translated to Cardiff. There he remained as archbishop until his death in St. Winifrede's Hospital on 28 February 1961.

Among Archbishop McGrath's papers is a copy of a report he sent to Rome on 7 March 1960. This report, prepared at the request of the Preparatory Commission of the Second Vatican Council, summarises the Archbishop's attitude to Wales and illustrates clearly his contribution to Welsh life. Writing of the Catholic community in Wales and answering the question, what is its future in Wales, he pointed out that the Catholic community was very largely of immigrant stock and with a large element whose forebears had come from Ireland. Though now settled in Wales for some generations, it had remained largely outside the cultural life of Wales. The most significant development in Wales since World War I, wrote the archbishop, was the decline of the Welsh language. Directly, this decline did not affect the life of the Catholic community to any great extent. Indirectly, however, it was a source of great danger for the future. He foresaw a continuing and accelerating decline of the language which would undermine the religious life of the nation and lead to widespread religious indifference. This indifference would undermine respect for family life and would lead to widespread divorce, to legalised abortion, to a lack of respect for life and property and to the abandoning of Christian standards in the relationships between the sexes. The significance of this analysis is not the accuracy of its vision of the future, striking as that is Archbishop McGrath's special contribution to the life of the Catholic community in Wales and to the life of Wales was his clear insight into the importance of the Welsh language and its historic culture. He enabled many fellow Catholics to see that the two are inseparable and that their fortunes and continuance are essential to the religious health of the nation and even to the survival of the Christian religion in Wales.

Author

Most Reverend Daniel Joseph Mullins

Sources

Personal knowledge

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Michael Joseph McGrath](#)

Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q4275614](#)

Published date: 2001

Article Copyright: <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/>

LGC
NLW

LLYFRGELL
THE NATION

