

Father Mark S. Gross and “the ‘Monk’ who fathered 300 children,” Dr. John Carr Monk of Newton Grove, NC

Bishop William H. Gross, fifth bishop of the Savannah Diocese, had a younger brother whose missionary zeal paralleled his own. The site of the ministry of the bishop's brother, Father Mark S. Gross, was North Carolina—a state with a meager Catholic population. A pivotal moment occurred in Father Mark's career in 1871 when he received a letter from Newton Grove physician, Dr. John C. Monk, addressed “To Any Catholic Priest, Wilmington, NC”. It seems Dr. Monk—an upright man—was angry about certain happenings at his local Methodist church.

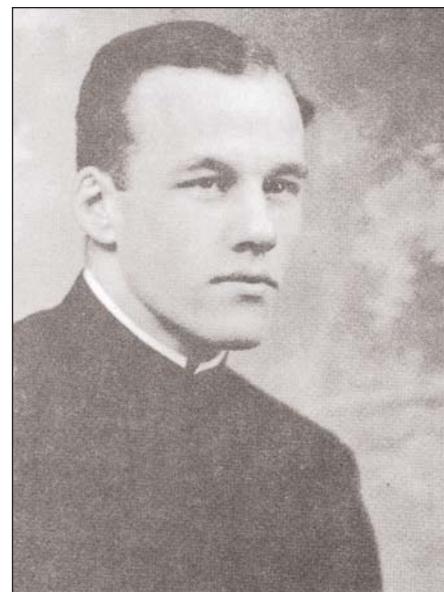


Photo from Scott Farrelly, GROSS GENEALOGY.

Mark Gross

Father Mark Gross and his protégé, Father Thomas Price—missionary to North Carolina and to the world. A tombstone in the cemetery of Newton Grove's Our Lady of Guadalupe Church memorializes Dr. John Monk, “the Monk who fathered 300 children.” Many descendants of Dr. Monk are buried in the cemetery and members of his family still attend the church he founded.

Columnist RITA H. DELORME is a volunteer in the Diocesan Archives. She can be reached at rdelorme@diosav.org.

What bothered the doctor was the ejection of black members of the congregation from the church. Incensed, Monk at first taught the former slaves himself in a chapel he and his brother Rufus constructed. Later, John Monk—still dissatisfied with his local church—became interested in Catholicism. The letter Father Mark Gross subsequently received from Dr. Monk sought information about the Catholic Church. Father Gross showed the doctor's letter to Bishop (later Cardinal) James Gibbons, Vicar Apostolic of North Carolina, and a packet of books about Catholicism was soon en route to Dr. Monk.

Inspired by what he read, the physician not only became Catholic but also brought his family and friends into the church with him. When Bishop Gibbons and Father Gross visited Newton Grove and confirmed the need for a Catholic church there, Dr. Monk supplied

land and means for one. Named “Saint Mark's” in honor of Father Gross, the church was consecrated by Bishop Gibbons in 1874. Although Dr. Monk died at age fifty, the number of Catholics in the area increased by the hundreds, causing Cardinal Gibbons to refer to Dr.

Monk as “the Monk who fathered 300 children.”

While pastor of Saint Thomas Church, Wilmington, Father Mark Gross encouraged a young parishioner, Thomas Frederick Price, to enter the priesthood.

When Price was ordained in Wilmington in 1886 he was the first North Carolinian to become a priest. Father Price's missionary work began in his home state, but moved further afield as he established the evangelistic magazine, *Truth*, in 1897 and Nazareth Orphanage in 1898. From Nazareth, he spread the word of Catholicism through the missionary training house he established in 1902. The scope of this North



Rita H. DeLorme

Child-safe environments in the Diocese of Savannah

By STEPHEN B. WILLIAMS

April has been designated as Child Abuse Prevention Month. The goals of the bishops of the United States and of every diocese are to make every month child prevention month. In the Diocese of Savannah there has been a concerted effort to create safe environments in every parish, school, and outreach agency since the Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People was developed in June 2002.

To date, over 5,500 adults have attended the VIRTUS Safe Environment training offered by the diocese. Additionally, over 5,200 background checks have been processed on diocesan

employees and volunteers who work with the youth of the diocese.

Although in every annual audit conducted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' representatives the Diocese of Savannah has been found compliant with carrying out the provisions of the Bishops' Charter, maintaining safe environments is an everyday responsibility that succeeds only due to the efforts at the local level.

In addition to the information notices on child protection which run monthly in the Diocesan Pastoral Bulletin, a visit to the VIRTUS website, www.virtus.org, always provides valuable information; and the diocesan Web site, www.diosav.org/chilyouthprotection, contains information and resources to assist the diocesan faithful in creating and maintaining safe environments.

STEPHEN B. WILLIAMS is Director the the Office of Child and Youth Protection for the Diocese of Savannah.

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SAVANNAH

Saturday, 6:00 p.m. Cable 7

Sunday, 5:30 a.m. WTOG-TV