

Rev. Edwin Vincent O'Hara

3rd State Chaplain of Oregon 1914-16



Edwin Vincent O'Hara was born September 6, 1881 in Lanesboro, MN to Owen and Margaret Nugent O'Hara.

He attended a one-room school on land his father donated and later graduated from Lanesboro High School. In 1897, O'Hara began studies at the college of St. Thomas in Saint Paul, MN. In 1900 he entered St. Paul's Seminary before moving to Oregon City, OR.

O'Hara was ordained to the priesthood on June 9, 1905, for the Diocese of Oregon City by Archbishop John Ireland. O'Hara began teaching Scripture and apologetics at St. Mary's Academy in Portland, Oregon. In 1907, he founded the Catholic Education Association of Oregon, and served as the superintendent of schools for the diocese. He formed the Dante Club at the Portland Public Library, where he gave lectures on history and the classics. In the face of considerable anti-Catholic bias, O'Hara sought to make Catholicism more visible in

order to dispel inaccurate notions of what Catholics believe.

In 1910 O'Hara came down with bronchitis. Ordered by Archbishop Alexander Christie to take a rest, he traveled to Europe for six weeks with his sister Anna. Upon his return, he spent a semester taking classes at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. He returned to Portland in 1911.

Influenced by the views of Archbishop Ireland and Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum novarum*, O'Hara began to look into the living conditions of factory workers in Portland. Based on his research, O'Hara published a book which he then sent to public officials and newspapers. In 1913 Oregon passed a minimum wage law. O'Hara was named chairman of the newly established Industrial Welfare Commission, which included both labor and management.

O'Hara served as a chaplain during World War I. After the war, O'Hara did pastoral work in the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon, and was a leading force in enacting a minimum wage law through the state legislature in 1913. He earned a doctorate from the University of Notre Dame.

Rev. O'Hara was the Oregon Knights of Columbus State Chaplain from 1914-16. In 1920 he became pastor in Eugene, OR. On August 6, 1930, O'Hara was appointed the second bishop of the Diocese of Great Falls by Pope Pius XI. In 1931, he was the only American bishop present when Pius XI delivered his encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*.



O'Hara was later named Bishop of Kansas City, Missouri, on April 15, 1939. Within his first ten years as bishop, the diocese built or bought 42 churches, 31 rectories, 24 colleges, high schools, and grade schools, 14 convents, 8 social centers, and 6 hospitals. Of the 30 churches he constructed in rural counties, 25 of them had never had a Catholic church before.

On September 11, 1956 while on a trip to Milan, Italy to speak to Archbishop Giovanni Battista Montini on the work of the confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Archbishop Edwin Vincent O'Hara succumbed to a sudden heart attack. He is buried at the Mount Olivet Cemetery in Kansas City, MO

