

America's First Negro Bishop

A Latin American newspaper (says the 'Boston Transcript') brings an interesting account of Monsignor Gomez Pimenta, Bishop of Marianna, Brazil, who has recently died. Previous to his death he had the distinction of being the first bishop of the colored race in the New World.

Silveria Gomez Pimenta was the son of slave parents. Born in extreme poverty, he knew what it was to be destitute and hungry. When a child he attended school half-naked and bare-footed, but he was from the first remarkable for his application and his good conduct. He was, in fact, so excellent a schoolboy that his case came to the attention of the Archbishop of Balua, who took a liking to the exceptional young negro and placed him, after some time, in the seminary of his See city. Here Pimenta, now a young man, pursued his studies for the priesthood. While still young he was raised to the episcopal dignity as Auxiliary Bishop of the diocese of Balua. In this he still won favor, and when the late Pope Leo XIII. restored the diocese of Marianna, Amazon, whose area was 300,000 square kilometres and whose population was two millions, he designated as its prelate the negro Bishop.

This new office was by no means a sinecure. For years the Bishop's territory had been more or less neglected, and the state of religion was far from ideal. He was almost alone and without resources, in his vast diocese. Added to this, it had been the scene of an anti-Catholic propaganda which rendered the new Bishop's task particularly difficult. But this son of slave parents, who had overcome so many obstacles in his life, was not discouraged by the situation, no matter how

hopeless it seemed. He bent every effort to the work in hand—to the building and maintaining of churches, schools, seminaries, houses of charity, etc., and gave so little thought to himself and his own dignity as a Bishop or even to his own comfort as a man, that he often went almost as poorly clad, and certainly with feet as destitute of covering, as when he attended school years before in Balua. But he succeeded before his death in rehabilitating the diocese which he had found in ruins, and in elevating the tone of its religious and social life.

The merit of this negro Bishop was not confined to his own diocese or to Brazil; nor did his life or labor prevent him from continuing these studies in which he showed himself so brilliant at school. He was a man of vast learning and had a high reputation among Orientalists for his knowledge of the Semitic languages.

A large number of the parishioners of St. Joseph's Church, Collingwood (Vic.), and a representative gathering of all sections of the community, tendered a complimentary social recently to the Rev. Father Carroll, who, after some years' ministry, has been transferred to Northcote. Mr. E. Wilkins, M.L.A., on behalf of the subscribers, handed Father Carroll an illuminated address, testifying to the respect, esteem, and affection in which he is held.

Friend, when a cold invades the nose,
And damp the daily hanky grows,
When racking coughs distract the breast,
And rob you of your nightly rest,
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