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News

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On March 7, 2017, Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York, was present as the official Archdiocesan phase of the Cause for Father Paul Wattson, SA was closed during a ceremony at the at headquarters of the Archdiocese of New York. Also in attendance was Fr. Gabriel O'Donnell, O.P., the postulator of the cause Prefect of the Congregation for the Cause of Saints, and Mons. Douglas Mathers, Vice-Chancellor of the Archdiocese and Episcopal delegate of the cause, and Vicar General of the Rev. Brian F. Terry, SA Franciscan Friars of the Atonement.

The Rev. Paul Wattson, SA, (1863-1940) was the founder of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement and a champion of Christian unity and helping the poor.

The Franciscan Friars of the Atonement began when a group of Episcopalians of the Anglo-Catholic “Oxford Movement”, Mother Lurana White and two companions traveled to Graymoor, 50 miles north of New York City, to look after the abandoned chapel of St. John in the Wilderness. Shortly after, Episcopalian Rev. Paul Wattson arrived, and he and Mother Lurana started a new religious community with the aim of re-establishing Franciscan life in the Anglican Communion.

The name of the new community was inspired by a passage in the Saint Paul’s letter to the Romans (Romans 5:11), which, in speaks of the atonement Christians have received through Jesus. Fr. Paul interpreted the word “atonement” in the literal sense of “at-one-ment,” out of his vision that his new community should have the aim of leading all Christians to unity (oneness) with one another.

After deep discernment, in 1909 both the men’s and women’s societies chose to seek union with the Holy See and full membership in the Catholic Church. In October 1909, the Vatican took the unprecedented step of accepting the members of the Society as a corporate body, allowing the Friars and Sisters to remain in their established way of life.

Now in union with the Rome, the Friars of the Atonement continued their work of advocating the reconciliation and eventual reunion of the various Christian denominations with the Pope as leader, thus helping to launch the modern ecumenical movement. A major part of this effort was the Octave of Christian Unity, now known as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

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The Franciscan Friars of the Atonement continue their work of charity and unity to this day.

To learn more about the friars and their work, visit their website at www.atonementfriars.org

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