

A UNIQUE TWENTY FOUR HOURS *in Rio Prieto Law*
(Espiritu Santo)

The events of Saturday and Sunday, June 18-19, will always be remembered as one of the most intensely spiritual experiences God could ever grant to a Bishop and a portion of his flock. And whereas many months had been spent in proper preparations, it all happened in exactly 24 hours, including a good night's sleep.

At 5 PM Saturday afternoon, Father Laure Bausa, the hard working priest in the mountain area of Puerto Rico in which it all happened, presented to the Bishop a confirmation class of 21 children and adults. The service took place in a house which had been offered for the occasion by two of the adult confirmands.

Immediately after confirmation, the Bishop, Archdeacon Garrett and Father Bausa, accompanied by the congregation, proceeded to a plot of ground splendidly located by the roadside; a gift of two members of the Church. Here it is the hope of the faithful in this area called Rio Prieto to build a chapel in the not too distant future. The simple yet solemn Service of the Blessing of Ground was offered, and the Archdeacon gave a brief resumé of the history of the work of the Church in this area during the past 15 years, which he himself had been instrumental in starting. By 6:30 PM a portion of ground had been set aside for holy purposes and a confirmation class had received the Laying on of Hands.

At 8 PM Saturday night, the West Doors of the newly constructed Church of San Bartolomé were opened in response to the triple knock of the Pastoral Staff. For several months Father Bausa had been one of the most ardent laborers connected with the building of this church. Before a congregation which packed the church to overflowing, the Bishop consecrated the building. That done, the second confirmation class of the day was presented by Father Bausa, and a group of 22 children and adults were confirmed. Archdeacon Garrett preached the sermon.

The dawn of the next day, Sunday, found the clergy in the sanctuary

of the new church, the Bishop celebrating the first Mass and the newly confirmed making their first communions.

Then the clergy drove to a fairly near by community called Castañer, where promptly at 9 AM a magnificent combination service of Consecration of a Church, Confirmation, and Mass took place, again before a congregation overflowing the new church of The Holy Cross. This time 19 children and adults were confirmed by the Bishop. Father Bauza was the celebrant of the Mass and the Archdeacon was the preacher. Now the congregation at Castañer at long last had their own concrete church in which to worship, located on the top of a bluff over looking the surrounding valley.

By lunch time, 19 hours after the beginning of things, a plot of ground had been received and blessed, two churches had been consecrated, three classes had been presented for confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist had been offered twice. But that was not all. There were 5 hours still left of the 24.

After lunch, the same three clergy (the Bishop, the Archdeacon and the Priest-in-charge) drove on to another community in quite a different direction, called Mirasel: "Behold, the sun". First the Bishop received the necessary legal papers of ownership of the plot of ground recently given by four members of the community. Then the West Doors of the third newly constructed chapel, this time bearing the name of the Church of the Most High Grace, were opened and the service of Consecration followed. Father Bauza then presented the confirmation candidates, 16 in number, from this congregation, whom the Bishop proceeded to examine and then confirm. Archdeacon Garrett preached the sermon on this occasion also while the congregation remained spell-bound by the beauty of the mountains as seen through the plate-glass reredos window above the altar; a gift of Dr. Lewis B. Franklin.

At exactly 5 PM Sunday afternoon, the Bishop gave the final Blessing,

just 24 hours after the beginning of things. And at the end of the 24 hours, what? Two pieces of ground had been received and blessed, three new chapels had been consecrated, Mass had been offered twice, and 4 confirmation classes had been presented and a total of 78 persons had received the Laying on of Hands.

Truly a unique 24 hours, don't you think?