

# INDIANS BAPTIZED

EVANGELIZATION BEGAN FIFTY YEARS AGO



DISPATCH sent out not long ago from Spokane, Wash., is as follows:

Father Joseph Caruana, first Catholic missionary among the Indians at the Pacific Northwest and recognized as the founder of that faith in what was then known as Oregon, will be the central figure in the celebration this fall at the fiftieth anniversary of the planting of Catholic faith in this part of the country.

Fifty years ago, on October 10, 1863, Father Caruana baptized 75 Indian children and five adults, all members of the Coeur d'Alene tribe, the baptism being held on the spot where the Northern Pacific railway's passenger station now stands in Spokane.

In this connection facts of importance to the history of this part of country have been learned through an investigation by Father George F. Weibel of Gonzaga university. He learned that Father Caruana, at the head of a band of twelve priests, found his way to the Spokane river falls in the early '50s. Father Weibel is authority for the statement that the first baptism of Indians in the Pacific Northwest was conducted at the site of what is now Spokane in October, 1863.

So far as is known here, Father Caruana is the only one of the band of pioneer priests now living. After completing his work with the tribes around Spokane, he went to De Smet, Idaho, where he founded the first Catholic mission in this part of the country. The mission still stands, and the aged priest, known to the Indians as Sosep and patriarch priest of the tribe, is still the leading spirit of the community. He is 79 years old.

The president and faculty of Gonzaga university in Spokane are now planning a golden jubilee to commemorate the planting of their faith here, and Father Caruana will have a large part to play in the ceremonies.

