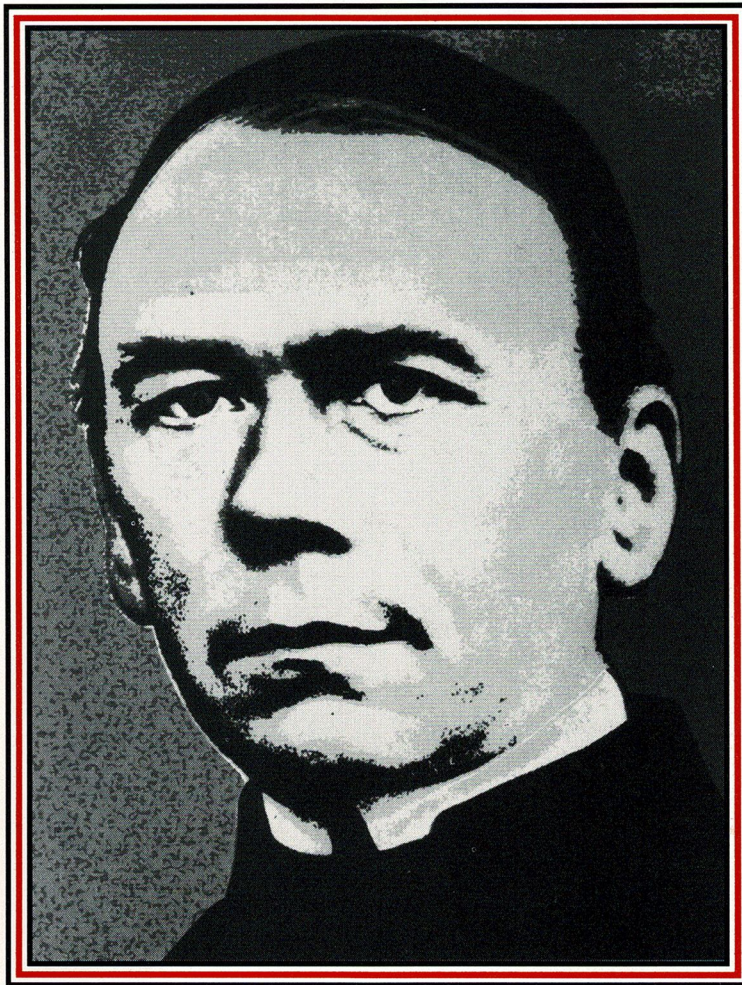


The Life and Work of
Father Adolph Kolping



Catholic Kolping Society of America

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PROLOGUE

The members of "Kolping" often celebrate with singing, dancing, picnics, festivals and other family-oriented events. They also come together to learn, to pray or to give a helping hand. It is not by chance that people associate "Kolping" with family. In 1849, the Society's founder, Blessed Adolph Kolping, laid the organization's foundation to improve the lives of young working men and families. Kolping's work continues to influence thousands.

Who was Adolph Kolping? What circumstances lead him to devote his life to starting a Society that has inspired the participation of so many individuals and families for so many years?

To understand Adolph Kolping's life, the reader needs to be aware of the geographical, political, and historical background into which he was born. Great changes were occurring at that time in Europe, the United States and, for that matter, the whole world. What was taking place in Europe greatly influenced Adolph Kolping, and motivated the persistent efforts which led to the founding of the Society.

In 1806, just a few years before Kolping's birth, the Holy Roman Empire came to an end. It had provided the government in most of what we know as Germany for about 10 centuries.

At the same time, the Industrial Revolution was spreading throughout the entire Western world, and farming was no longer the main source of family existence. People were flocking to the cities to improve their standard of living and, in most instances, found only poverty and poor living conditions. Many were lost in the over crowded cities and had no family support to see them through hard times. Especially affected by these circumstances were the traveling journeymen, who went from city to city looking for work. They soon earned a bad reputation because of their immoral and unruly behavior.

After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815, the victorious powers assembled at the Congress of Vienna. Their task was to restore order to Europe. Their efforts resulted in the formation of the German Confederation, a union of 39 independent states. Except for four self-governing cities, the German states were ruled by kings or princes. The Rhineland, the area where Adolph Kolping was born and lived, came to be governed by the King of Prussia.

In 1813, the year of Kolping's birth, the United States was 38 years old. James Madison, the fourth president, led the young Republic. Westward expansion was underway, and immigrants were coming to America in search of a better life.

George III ruled in England (the same king who reigned during the American Revolution), Alexander I was Tsar of Russia. Francis I, Emperor of Austria, was the last ruler of the Holy Roman Empire.

All these events played an important part in the life of Adolph Kolping.

*Julie Kessler, National Historian
Catholic Kolping Society of America*

TURMOIL ACROSS EUROPE

The turn of the eighteenth century and birth of the nineteenth found Europe in great turmoil. The French Revolution of 1789 had destroyed centuries of old traditions involving State and Church authority. "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," the slogan of the day, had stirred many minds in Europe's nations and contributed to the end of feudalism.

Then, with Napoleon's rise, a new wave of terror swept the continent. With him, the second Revolution began. Seizing the French Revolution's rallying cry, Napoleon used the people's passionate enthusiasm for liberty to build an empire on the ruins of the nobility. Soon the French flag flew over Sweden, Holland, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Spain, and by 1806 the once powerful Holy Roman Empire ceased to exist. Misery and chaos were left in the wake of Napoleon's assaults.

In 1812, driven by his insane greed for power, Napoleon invaded Russia. But as mighty Bonaparte led France's powerful armies across the bleak steppes of the great Tsarist empire, his fate was about to change. After triumphantly entering Moscow, he found the city in ashes. For the first time, Napoleon knew defeat.

Without food or shelter, the poorly clad, frozen French troops began their long cold journey back across Europe. Only a few thousand survivors reached Germany's eastern border. The towns, villages, and people of the German lands suffered great destruction from the retreating French army.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

The towns and villages west of the Rhine were under direct French rule with French as the official language. This area came to be in the center of the battle to defeat Napoleon.

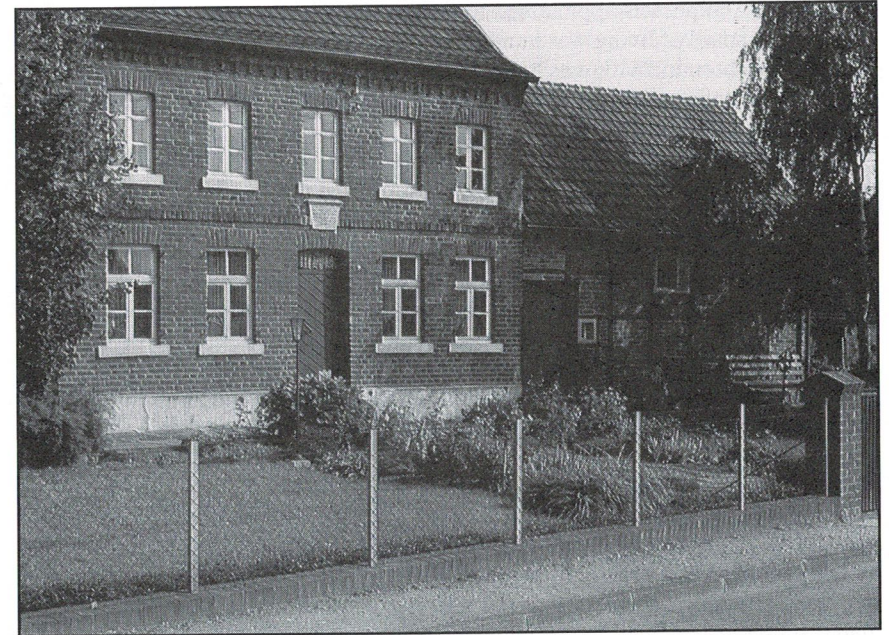
The birth place of Adolph Kolping was one of the towns caught in the turmoil. Kerpen, located 12 miles west of Cologne, had once been a thriving place where such notables as Beethoven spent their vacations. It was during the final struggle to rid this part of Germany from French dominance that Kolping was born December 8, 1813. Only six weeks after his birth, German troops and Russian Cossacks brought French rule to an end in Kerpen.

A story told about Kolping's birth indicates just how dangerous a time it was. According to the story, a worried neighbor took the Kolping infant from his cradle and hid him until roaming soldiers left the area. The baby's parents did not know what had happened. They were grieving the loss of their child, thinking he had been kidnapped. In the end, Adolph was safely returned.

Adolph's parents, Peter and Anna Kolping, owned a little property. Peter also worked as a shepherd on a nearby farm. To make ends meet he tended his own garden and fields with the help of his wife and children.

Anna and Peter were born in Kerpen. Adolph inherited a lively mind from his mother and an easy going, down to earth temperament from his father. The blending of these traits enabled their son to carry out his destiny.

The fourth of five children, Adolph was frail from birth and excused from helping with the household chores. He was sent to school instead.



Fr. Kolping's birthplace in Kerpen, Germany.

Later in his adult life when he published stories in almanacs, he gave insight into his happy family life. He regarded his mother a saint and he wrote his most beautiful words about her:

"You nursed me though the effort was beyond your strength and drew another crease into your face. I cherish your efforts, now that I am older. You carried me in your arms and defended me. Everyday I was able to look into your eyes. You kissed me, put me to bed at night, and woke me in the morning. It was you, not the hand of a stranger, that made the Sign of the Cross on my forehead. For all this I am grateful to you, to this day, dearest mother."

According to the son's description, his mother embodied family life, and he owed her thanks for more than giving him birth. His love of people undoubtedly came from her. Her son was just reaching his twenties when Anna Kolping died July 4, 1833.

When Adolph was 13, he had to choose a career. In his later writings, he told how he had felt about this as a youth:

"I would have loved to continue with my education, but my parents could not afford to do that. They had little money and the best course for me was to learn a trade that would secure my future. But even in choosing a trade, I had to consider the money my parents were able to spend without depriving my brothers and sisters. So, with a heavy heart, I chose the shoemaker's trade." (Parents had to pay a fee for apprenticeships for their children to the shop owners.)

In 1826, Adolph was apprenticed to a shoemaker in Kerpen. As an apprentice, the boy's standard of living was humble. For example, while the composer Richard Wagner, also born in 1813, was being initiated into German High Society, Kolping was being introduced to the shoemaker's workshop. In later years, though, both men became well known.

Kolping's destiny may have been predicted when, at age 13, he stood at the deathbed of his parish priest. As the old man blessed the fair, bright eyed, boy he said, "I bless you, child. It seems that God is calling you to accomplish great things in your life."

After Kolping completed his apprenticeship, he began working for different shoemakers in villages surrounding his hometown. He told the humorous story of how, as a young shoemaker, he once made a pair of boots for his father. Peter Kolping could put them on easily but had a lot of difficulty taking them off.

In 1832, Kolping looked for work in Cologne in order to improve his skill. By 1837 he was good enough in his trade to hold his own in the city's best shops.

JOURNEYMEN AND INDUSTRY

In 1784, the Industrial Revolution had begun in England and was in full swing by the time Kolping began his apprenticeship in 1826. The invention and use of machines attested to the fact that the nineteenth century was experiencing more than just political change. Industrial and economic changes were also having a significant impact on people's lives. Wherever factories were busy or commerce was active, people came to work for better wages. These were the years when Europe's social structure was completely revolutionized and "production" was beginning to form the basis of society.

During this period, labor increased while time honored trades became less important. Many journeymen became mere laborers and fell into moral decay as they became part of the masses. Some understood "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" to allow for terrorism and immorality. Coupled with political unrest, this misunderstanding destroyed the very fiber which linked people to traditional morals and customs.

When Adolph became a shoemaker, he did not join the journeymen's guild because people held it in low esteem. Although at one time "A trade in hand finds gold in every land" had been a common saying, it was no longer true.

Kolping observed the social problems in these changing times. "I still shudder," he began in his autobiography, "when I think of the time I spent among the demoralized and lawless German journeymen."

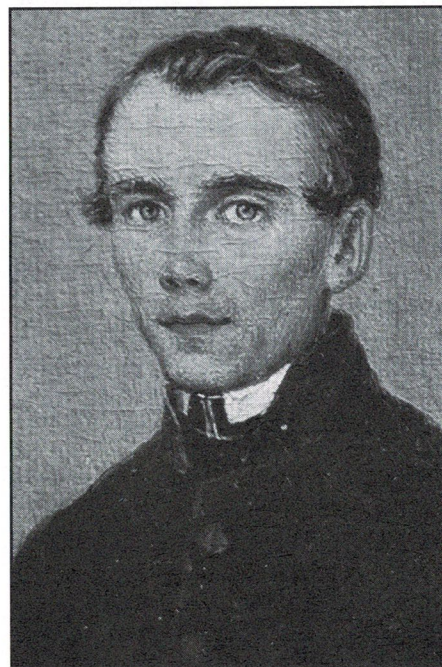
He often wrote about the journeyman's poor social conditions from his own experiences. To draw the attention of peers, he once wrote:

"The journeymen often work on Sunday. They take little heed of God or Church; either spending their money by betting and drinking at roadside inns or by visiting places which offer entertainment that is morally unacceptable. If they still have money left Monday offers them ample opportunities to squander it. Often, they have no decent clothes to wear. So they only leave their rooms at night, and then, only to satisfy their passions. Decent people are shocked by their language and behavior. Preferring the wild life, they take advantage of their

positions, youth and strength in order to enjoy life as they see fit. People, afraid to be involved with them, avoided this riffraff. Only those who are after their money keep in touch with them, but turn their backs on them as soon as the money runs out."

When Kolping outlined this dark picture of the journeyman's life, he pointed out that he had seen and experienced these conditions first hand. "Pained and sick at heart, I turned away from the scenes I often had to witness", he wrote.

NEW GOALS



Adolph Kolping as a young man.

Dissatisfied with his trade, Kolping was drawn toward a very different goal in life. Both the literary and spiritual values he had gained encouraged him to pursue his goal. Kolping was reaching an age when it became necessary to earn a decent living. His father was old and frail, his siblings were not wealthy, and he felt obliged to contribute to help them support their father. His earnings as a shoemaker, however, did not permit him to do so. He loathed the insecurity of his profession and saw no future in it. In spite of the many uncertainties facing him, Kolping's boyhood dream to study for the priesthood became so overpowering that he decided to leave his profession and go to school.

Adolph knew he had to overcome many obstacles, yet, his confidence in working toward a greater goal, supported by God's grace, enabled him to meet the challenges that lay ahead.

Peter Kolping understood his son's decision and encouraged him to follow his heart. But when the young man went to his parish priest for help with the tutoring in Latin he would need to begin his education, he was told, "Shoemaker, stay with your chosen craft". Kolping was not discouraged; he wrote in his autobiography:

"I was less conscious of the obstacles which lay in the way of achieving my wish, than of the fear that people might doubt my sincerity or look scornfully at the journeyman who approached them with such a strange idea."

Kolping eventually found a young priest in his parish who willingly tutored him. The priest was very conscientious and would take no money from him. In 1837, Kolping passed the entrance exam and began attending classes at the Catholic high school in Cologne.

Returning to school was difficult. Again he wrote:

"I sit all day and night, studying silly, ridiculous problems, wasting my time and not progressing an inch. Everything seems to go in slow motion just when I want to move ahead. Yet, I must turn a deaf ear to this inner voice and, like the others, go at a snail's pace along education's path, and be happy!"

To make matters worse Kolping had no money. As a shoemaker he had earned enough to live a simple life, but now he had nothing. Few gifts came his way. When possible, he tutored fellow students.

"My days are taken up with tutoring and my evenings with study," he wrote to a friend. "As you can imagine, I am very busy."

Even with tutoring, Kolping lacked many necessities. His exhausting life style caused him to become seriously ill in 1838 and again in 1839. One of the illnesses that struck him was smallpox. The event leading to this illness, reflects true Christian charity.

Kolping was told that a shoemaker, with whom he once worked, had come down with smallpox. Kolping immediately went to visit the man and found him alone dying in an attic room. The man's landlady would not care for him because she was afraid of being infected. Knowing the man had no one, Kolping took care of him until he died.

People criticized Kolping for risking his own life and taking time away from his studies. "My help was needed; therefore, I had to give it. As for the rest, God will see to that," he replied.

Kolping was not spared. Although he recovered from smallpox, his face bore pock marks for the rest of his life.

One of Kolping's biographers, Sebastian Georg Schaffer, attributes Kolping's early death to the hardships he endured during these years.

In the spring of 1841, the 27 year old scholar finished high school and reached the first step towards priesthood.

PRIESTHOOD

On December 19, 1840, shortly before completing his studies, Kolping found a mysterious note asking him to come at once to an address near the Cologne Cathedral. The note bore no signature. Not understanding, but sensing he was needed, Kolping went to the address shown and found a man standing in the entrance, beckoning him to follow. After the pair climbed some darkened stairs, the man opened the door to a dingy, dimly lit room. Kolping was astonished to see a dying man lying on a cot. A woman was kneeling by the cot. As she rose to her feet, Kolping recognized her as Maria Helena Meller, eldest daughter of the landowner for whom his father worked. He also recognized the dying man as Bertram Joseph Kalker.

Kalker once lived in the vicinity of Kerpen. He had studied theology and tutored students. Kalker was an alcoholic and alcoholism was causing his death. Though Kolping knew that Kalker had once tutored at the Meller home, he did not fully understand why Maria Helena was at his bedside. Before he could ask any questions, Maria Helena pointed to an envelope lying on the table and asked that Kalker be taken care of and given a proper burial. She left without saying anything more.

Kalker died that same night and Kolping carefully carried out the request made of him.

During the Christmas holidays, while Kolping was visiting his father in Kerpen, Maria Helena came to see Adolph and explained what had happened. She told him of her love for Kalker, thanked him for caring and offered him the financial assistance he needed for his studies.

Finally free of financial worry, Kolping chose to continue his studies at the University of Munich, a highly accredited institution of German Catholic intellectual life. Some of the most outstanding scholars of the time taught him there. Kolping wanted to complete his studies in Munich, but he was required to return to Bonn in the autumn of 1842 to finish his degree at the diocesan university.

The following spring, Kolping passed the entrance exam to the seminary in Cologne. After completing the courses, he was ordained to the priesthood April 13, 1845. The ordination took place in the Minorite Church in Cologne. He would later become the rector of this church, and it would also be the site of his final resting place.

A letter, written by a former teacher and priest friend, gives us a glimpse of the feelings which must have filled Kolping's heart at the time of his ordination:

"You are about to take holy orders; Rejoice! Long have you yearned for this moment. How distant it all seemed when you first sat at my desk in Kerpen to begin your elementary studies. How insurmountable the obstacles that stood between you and your goal. Yet, our Lord heard your prayers as you knelt before his altar and answered this call to service. God has brought low every mountain and filled every valley, making straight your path in a miraculous way.

God has led you to the door at which you now stand in awe, awaiting his call to enter. If, at this moment, you tremble at the thought of shouldering the burden which lies ahead, you have every reason to do so. Still, that which lies ahead should not worry or discourage you. For, if you look to your past, you will see that it was not you, but God who called you to the priesthood.

You were a grown man when you decided to take this step. Many difficulties and hardships had to be overcome, and our Lord stood by and helped you. Often you were without money and about to lose courage, but our Lord touched the hearts of those whose charity miraculously came your way. Through these events, you must hear the voice of the Lord who has called you to service and who will provide you with the strength to faithfully follow this calling to the end.

If, however, conscious of your frailty, you are still afraid; listen to Lord's voice saying, 'My grace is enough for you,' and reply, 'I can do all things in the One who makes me strong.' God's grace, the only thing we can glory in, will not desert those who ask for it humbly. Pray, therefore, with confidence. I, too, am among those who pray for you."

On his ordination day, the newly ordained priest received news that his father had died the night before. Peter Kolping had long suffered from cancer. In his final hour, he received a comforting vision in which he saw every detail of his son's ordination. He told his daughter Catherine all about the brightly shining candles, the colors of the flowers, and all the priests who he knew by name. "You can't possibly

see more than I have already seen," Peter said. Father Kolping's first priestly act was to bury his father.

Every new priest eagerly awaits his first assignment. Father Kolping had hoped to be assigned to a small village where he could continue his studies. Instead, he was appointed associate pastor and teacher of religion at St. Lawrence Church, the only Catholic church in Elberfeld, a city in the Rhineland. Elberfeld was located near Wuppertal, a busy industrial center. Kolping was unhappy with this assignment because it would allow no time for studying and, in addition, the spiritual field in Elberfeld would be difficult to cultivate. Replying to his complaints, a friend wrote to him:

"I see that you still suffer from restlessness and impatience. You despair as soon as you are faced with a difficulty. Yet, you are willing to take on the whole world for a cause. Where is the happy medium? It is, my dear friend, where the Good Shepherd has placed you, in Elberfeld. What good is wishful thinking, fretting, or complaining? Everything happens as God wants it to happen. The main thing for us is to help as many people pass through the gates of Heaven as possible. In order to do this, we must keep watch in the place where God has put us. Relying on the strength and grace God has granted us, we work and pray, while leaving the results to God."

A fellow priest said Kolping's unhappiness rested within himself. The priest commented that in Kolping's attempt to attain his goals, "he has too little regard for people and their environment. He flatly declares that they should accept and practice what he considers to be the best solutions."

People seem to either admire or dislike personalities like Adolph Kolping's. Consequently, he made as many friends as enemies in Elberfeld. Nevertheless, being at odds with people was difficult for him to accept.

"My whole life has been a struggle, and I suppose it will remain a struggle to the end," he wrote in 1863.

YOUNG MEN'S CLUB

In the spring of 1846, a small group of young men in Elberfeld had formed a club under the spiritual leadership of Father Steenaerts and the lay leadership of Johann Gregor Breuer, a dedicated teacher. The men met weekly in Breuer's classroom for religious instruction, and they enjoyed singing in their leisure time. Loosely organized at first, the group gradually became more structured. With its religious base, the club acquired specific goals although the members had not defined any mission statement at the time. The club simply consisted of some active young journeymen gathered under a priest's leadership.

When Father Steenaerts was transferred, Kolping was elected to the role of Praeses (meaning protector/father of a higher order) of the club. Although the men had not elected him unanimously, they all loved him. Later, many referred to him as their father.

FATHER OF JOURNEMEN

Revolutionary movements and economic riots swept Elberfeld in 1848. Kolping kept the members of his club away from the conflict. "In the teeth of these troubled times," he said, "we build a house of peace, with a Cross on its gable. God's blessings will dwell herein."

In that same year, he wrote:

"God-fearing, bright and cheerful young men who keep cool heads, pure hearts, and who stand firm in their beliefs are the best and perhaps only guarantee for a happy future. To see you happy, to help you achieve your goals, and to serve you who are near and dear to me, will be, with God's grace, the most important and cherished task of my life."



Kolping Monument in Cologne, Germany.

Here, for the first time, Kolping indicates that his mission in life would be devoted to the journeymen.

In an 1849 pamphlet entitled, "The Journeymen's Society, Thoughts to Consider on the Well Being of People," Kolping tells his readers that "Active love heals all wounds; mere words only increase the pain." This pamphlet was widely distributed and described Kolping's thoughts on existing social, religious and moral decay. An immediate success, the pamphlet prompted letters of inquiry, appreciation and encouragement. This response increased Kolping's commitment to young people.

Kolping wanted to expand the Journeymen's Society throughout Germany with the purpose of influencing the education of the Catholic populace. Through this expansion, his ultimate goal was to shape Catholic family life. Kolping knew he could not accomplish this mission while stationed in Elberfeld. He wanted to return to Cologne and finally succeeded by being appointed Vicar of the Cologne Cathedral. In March of 1849, Kolping left Elberfeld to return to the city where he began his priestly life.

Kolping wrote about the problems he faced on his return to Cologne. "Everything is very difficult here. My accommodations are meager, I am alone, and I have no one to help me. Still, I follow the motto, 'Don't give in; the greater the challenge, the more resolute one must become.'"

On May 6, 1849, Kolping held his first Journeymen's meeting, attended by seven young men, in a school classroom. As Kolping's message spread, the classroom became too small for the weekly meetings.

"The place is bursting at its seams with people," were Kolping's words, as he went in search of a larger meeting place.

As he became well known in Cologne, larger quarters were easily found, and, furthermore, as the organization grew, donations steadily increased. A master at soliciting funds, Kolping was sometimes called Brother Deo Gratias.

Soon, Kolping purchased a boarding house designed to accommodate traveling journeymen. The site of that original house, on Breite St., now serves as the location for the International Kolping House.

The Society's members were also becoming known. They were either respected as hard working Catholics or despised for their beliefs.

The Society soon extended in all directions from Cologne. Its goals focused on offering advanced academic training to its members. Unlike the government, which had failed in its responsibility to educate its citizens in the trades, the Society provided indepth course work which prepared journeymen to become masters in their trades. The curriculum included both general and specialized subjects. Later, according to Kolping's plan, the Society was divided into groups by profession. He wanted the Society to be an "Academy of the People," a kind of university extension.

The Society looked after the traveling journeymen. While the morality of existing roadside inns had decayed, Kolping worked to establish a network of "new Christian inns" where, "the Cross was given a place of honor," and journeymen could live in a Christian environment. To achieve this goal Kolping published a code of conduct for journeymen, setting down ideals which are accepted today. Using strong words in his 1852 pamphlet, "In Support of Journeymen Houses," he described the need to establish such residences.

The more the journeymen's Society expanded, the more Kolping stressed the necessity of structuring it into a family-like community. Kolping wrote that the

family-like community was specifically designed to prepare its members for marriage:

"In the Society, members are to find a home away from home. They are to find friends of their own social standing with whom they share similar interests and with whom they can live in a loving and friendly environment. By sympathizing with each other in times of joy and sorrow, in true brotherhood, they lay the foundation for their future lives."

He also wrote, "The family-like atmosphere of the Society prepares the young man for raising his own family."

As time went on, the Society's main principle leaned toward the education on family life.

"We can identify a Catholic organization by the fact that it has a family structure. The more closely it reflects this ideal, the more Catholic it is," he wrote.

Kolping's teachings were widely accepted and the Society continued to expand throughout central Europe. These same teachings make his work as valuable today as it was during his lifetime.

The Society also spread quickly because of its members. Kolping called them, "the best missionaries of the movement." The journeymen's organizations of the Rhineland met May 1, 1850, and decided to establish a national organization. They met again in 1851 and passed a resolution to unite local branches under the name, "Catholic Journeymen's Society." Eighteen city associations participated in the third general meeting. At this time Baden, Bavaria and Silesia also founded National Societies. Berlin and Munich became important branches. Munich was among the first to establish its own boarding house.

In 1852, Kolping went to Austria and met with great success. His lectures stirred enthusiasm for his work among young people, thus enabling him to establish journeymen's societies in all the cities he visited. In Vienna, he gained the interest of a remarkable man, Father Anton Gruscha, who became his first Austrian Praeses and later the Cardinal of Vienna.

As the number of branches grew, the more important it became that they unite. Unity would assure that the work of the branches would be directed toward the Society's goals. Kolping, himself, fought for this unity. He maintained, "unity is the most important element; it represents our truly Catholic bond." Shortly before his death, Kolping wrote to Praeses Gruscha, saying, "...I am not budging...the Society must have a central authority which is permitted to accept or, if the need arises, dismiss any of its branches." Kolping's commanding persona enabled him to unite the organization in all matters.

THE ORATOR

Early biographies state that Kolping was a great public speaker with an ability to hold an audience's attention. He began speaking at rallies when he was a student in Munich. Later, while touring the country and spreading his work, he developed his speaking skills to such a degree that he became known as one of the great orator's of his time. He could stir his audience by warming their hearts and inspiring their imaginations. His energetic mind contributed, of course, to his achievements.

Kolping spoke to the journeymen like a father would, in a realistic, simple and friendly manner. Kolping gave many speeches and also wrote extensively in his

efforts to reach, educate and reform his followers.

It did not take long for people outside the Society to notice Kolping. The General Council of German Catholics in Mainz invited him to address them in 1851. Here, he experienced his greatest triumph as an orator.

Five thousand Catholics had gathered for the event in a building filled to capacity. The meeting had just begun and someone was giving a speech when a practical joker set off a fire alarm. Panic spread. People were trying to reach the exits. In an attempt to bring order, Kolping was asked to talk to the crowd. The meeting's minutes recorded how he addressed the frenzied people and calmed them down.

Kolping's speeches were successful because he knew how to reach people. An Austrian priest described Kolping's style, saying, "There was nothing formal in his speech. It was inspirational because it came from a soul filled with religious conviction."

Though not fancy, Kolping's speeches stirred audiences powerfully. Listeners sensed his characteristic love and willingness to help. Audiences were attracted to him because his words came from the heart. His simplicity had a dynamic impact. This is why Kolping urged his fellow priests not to approach the people "sitting on a high horse." One of his golden rules for public speaking stated, "One should speak plainly without being trivial."

Kolping spoke in a plain, straightforward, manner. He used rougher expressions when he needed to make a point. Despite this, Kolping said, "Swearing is not a noble thing to do; it is a matter for boys. As for rudeness, any common lout can be rude."

Kolping reserved his sharpest comments for Marxists whom he referred to as 'messengers of the devil,' 'barricade builders,' and 'red gas bags.' He once said, "...they began by reciting their diabolic catechism and then left for London. There they invent evil plans for squandering the money which, under false pretenses, they coaxed from the people." On another occasion, Kolping remarked that Communist agitators are like, "ruthless predators ready to attack the social order."

Kolping also used a keen sense of humor in his talks. This humor appealed to people and greatly added to his popularity.

THE AUTHOR

Kolping's talent and success as an author paralleled his talent and success as an orator. As a young man, his writing career was already established. Both the poems and essays he wrote as a youth show his ability. Even as a student, Kolping had some of his writings published.

While in Elberfeld, Kolping hoped to start a weekly Catholic paper. Although his hope did not materialize, he did publish his first pamphlet, entitled "Journeyman's Societies."

Father Kolping composed his most important writings after his return to Cologne in 1849. The Catholic Press was almost non-existent when Adolph Kolping and Hermann Christian Vosen, a religion teacher and friend, became editors of the "Rhenish Church Journal." They changed that paper from a monthly to a weekly, and, in 1850, added a Kolping authored supplement, entitled "Society Tabloid." On April 1, 1851, the title became "Leisure Hour."

Vosen left in 1851. Kolping continued as editor until 1854 when he began publishing his own paper, "The Rhenish Peoples Press." Circulation rose quickly and

Kolping's reputation as an author was established. This newspaper was the area's first successful Catholic publication. One writer in 1861 said it was "a perfect example of the spirit in which a popular paper should be written."

Kolping succeeded so well as a writer and publisher, that he was considered for the editorship of a daily Catholic newspaper. Although he did not get the job, he continued writing to inform the public of social injustices, and to educate them on social and religious matters.



Almanacs became popular reading in the 19th Century. In 1854 Kolping began publishing an almanac for the Catholic community. Readers showed wide acceptance for his almanac. They liked the writer's originality, common sense and deep religious conviction; and they welcomed his stories.

Kolping wrote most of the articles for both the newspaper and the almanac. His style was unique. Although he didn't pay much attention to the "accepted" methods of writing, he did research important topics thoroughly. His primary concern was not to enrich literature, but improve education.

Kolping had this to say about his writings, "Their purpose is to call the reader's attention to God's guiding hand in history." Of his style, he stated,

"I must be excused for paying little attention to standard form. A man who writes almanacs has no time to go out to a quiet place and chisel away at his handiwork until it is smooth and attractive enough to hold its own in a literary exhibition."

The educational value of his writings far outweighed his style. He indicated his purpose in writing when he said, "A father can improve matters at home only if his attention is called to the simple things which are lacking in his household." With his almanacs, he wanted to influence family life and bring happiness into the home. Kolping's writings contain wisdom well worth reading today.

Kolping liked to write dialogue as well as stories. A popular style, dialogue conveyed his message and gave full range to his imagination. Kolping's characters seemed real; many were based on his contemporaries. One of his favorite fictional characters was Doctor Fliederstrauch which means Dr. Lilac Bush. Through discussions with another character called Stephen the Mailman, Dr. Fliederstrauch communicated Kolping's views.

Kolping wrote to earn money as well as to educate. The income from writing enabled him to further his endeavors and to take care of his own needs. "Kolping lived a simple life," the biographer Schaffer wrote,

"During his early years as Praeses, he hung his clothes on a nail because he did not have a closet. His food, drink and clothes were that of a very humble man."

He had a good head for finance. When he died, Kolping left a modest sum for the continuing maintenance of the first journeymen's residence in Cologne and to the Society.

Educating people about family life was Kolping's principle goal. In all his publications he constantly emphasized the family. For example, in the first issue of the "Rhenish People's Paper", he wrote:

"Our primary goal is to improve the environment in the home. We hope to create a brighter, more cheerful, and peaceful atmosphere in the home. We hope to clear away misunderstanding, open eyes and ears so that the heart can become unburdened, we hope to generate contentment so fathers will want to stay at home, that wives will respect their husbands, and that their children will love their parents and learn from them the basic rules of divine and human virtue."

At the time of his death, Kolping was writing an article for girls on motherhood. The steady author deliberately repeated himself. "Fundamental truths," he said, "must be repeated again and again so that they sink into the very recesses of the heart never to be forgotten."

APOSTLE OF THE FAMILY

Theodor Brauer, an expert on Kolping philosophy, was forced to leave Germany when Hitler came to power. He came to the United States where he continued to write.

In several writings treating Kolping's philosophy on the family, Brauer candidly referred to Adolph Kolping as the "Father of Journeymen", and as the "Social Philosopher of the Family".

"Kolping's philosophy of the family could fill volumes and his concern for the family echoes in every one of his words."

On the subject of family life, Kolping himself wrote:

"Everyone will agree that the deepest roots of human life are planted in the soil of the family from which they spring. Man receives his first and most vital food, both physical and spiritual, from the family. Individual successes and failures can be traced back to the family; they rest in this bedrock of human society. Social problems, large or small,

hinge on its well-being; and public life mirrors the state of family life.

Citizens openly display the values they have developed at home. If public life is not healthy, we can be sure that the evidence of corruption points to a sick or broken family life.

Therefore, anyone wishing to improve public life, must turn to the family, and give it one's whole hearted attention. Until the family receives the respect and dignity, which is its due, public life will not improve. Only when happiness and integrity are fostered at home, will they be seen in society; only then will we produce great and noble leaders. In order to help all people, we must focus our attention on the quality of family life."

Kolping also wrote,

"The salvation of humanity begins in the family, in matrimony and is the result of a good home. Humanity's health will not be restored by wise men in lecture halls, artists' studios, inventor's laboratories, or military camps. Neither will it be restored by public debates or the media. Recovery will only happen when the family is restored to its rightful place. The healing process must begin with the family.

Family happiness is not dependent on social status, wealth or culture. It can be found both in palaces and in villages; for our God has seen to it that all people are created equal. As soon as this equality is restored, so too, will human conflict be resolved.

What I now ask is directed to all who want to improve humanity! In what condition is your own family? Are you fulfilling your duties regarding your family? If one amongst you pretends to be a savior of the people, yet neglects his own family, rest assured you will betray the people."

In another quote, Kolping states,

"Listen scholars; the well-being of family life is far more important than your science, your art, or your militia. You see, while you venture into unknown reaches of science, while you imprison the human spirit in art, while you attempt to guide the world into a new political system, and while you dream of creating spectacular inventions, the family has been neglected and no consideration has been given to its welfare. Our social ills stem from the misery of the family. Family life is so sick that the best doctor in the world would despair trying to heal it. Yet, if we could begin to cure its ills and help its members work together; we would enable the family to prosper. We, through honesty, respect and love would lead family life to what God meant it to be; we would, in principle, relieve untold suffering and save humanity.

As long as family life is disabled, so is society. Therefore, our best efforts must be directed toward restoring the family. We can preach and educate individuals until we are blue in the face; we can agonize over designing impressive state programs; but, if family life remains unhealthy, all our efforts will be in vain.

I am not even sure that religion can flourish unless this precious gift is tended to with great care. Such is the importance of family life."

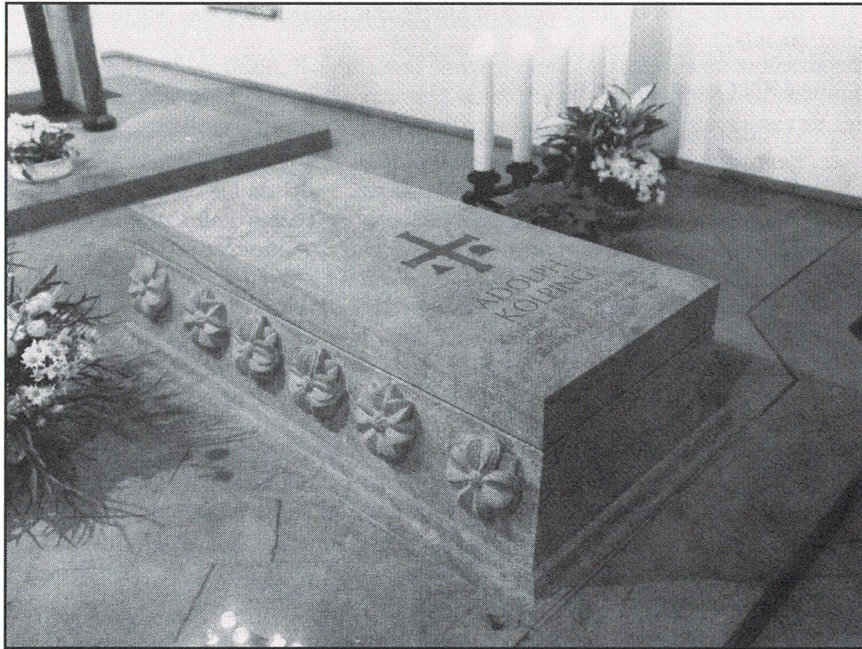
By reading his words and carefully studying their meaning, one can sense the intensity which compelled Kolping to devote his life to the family apostolate. Kolping dedicated his life to saving the family and fostered its roots in the spirit of the Christian tradition. Kolping's many letters, written to actual families, show the skillful way in which he promoted the Christian family.

No records exist to demonstrate Kolping's influence on the families he touched through the Journeymen's Society, yet, it is known that he saw the Society as an extension of the family, a place which educated men on how to become competent fathers. After his death, a Praeses, emphasized Kolping's apostolate to the family when he said:

"Countless blessings and streams of light emanate from Kolping's grave. They lead thousands of young men, hand in hand with many priests and grateful parents, in procession. They bless the memory of the man who helped them preserve the best of their childhoods."

Kolping worked to restore the Christian family and literally gave his life caring for people. He died on December 4, 1865 in the prime of his life at the age of 51. On April 30, 1866, with permission from the King of Prussia, his body was taken from a cemetery in Cologne and interned in the Minorite church in front of the St. Joseph altar. The inscription on his tombstone reads:

"Here lies the servant of God, Adolph Kolping. He requests the charity of your prayer."



Tomb of the Blessed Adolph Kolping

FINAL RESTING PLACE

The Order of Friars Minor of Saint Francis began the construction of the Minorite church in 1242. It was completed in 1264. It is said that the same workmen who built the famous Cologne Cathedral helped to construct the church.

In the 19th century, the Franciscans turned over the Minorite church to the Cologne diocese, and in April 1862, Father Kolping became its rector. During his tenure, he renovated it, and his successors, the International Praesides of the Kolping Society, have served as its rectors ever since.

After World War II, the Kolping Society of America provided money for the rebuilding of the church, and in 1991 under the direction of Msgr. Heinrich Festing, the edifice was restored to its original design.

In 1980, Pope John Paul II visited the Kolping tomb in Cologne. On that occasion he stated: "The Church needs people like Adolph Kolping today".

Another well known person buried in the Minorite church is the 13th Century Franciscan theologian, Duns Scotus.

KOLPING SOCIETY IN AMERICA

German immigrant journeymen who wanted to continue their association with Father Adolph Kolping founded the first Kolping Society in St. Louis, Missouri on May 17, 1856. Two years later branches were established in Quincy, Illinois and Racine, Wisconsin, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1859. Documentation exists that these branches set up a national organization. However, exact dates and other facts about this organization have been lost through the years and little information about its activities and officers is available. In the late 1800's the following branches were established: Chicago, Illinois (1872), Dayton, Ohio (1883), New York, New York (1888), and Paterson, New Jersey (1889).

It was not until 1922 that new efforts were made to re-establish a National Organization. In that year, while celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Chicago branch, some members from New York and Chicago held a special meeting to discuss the re-establishment of the National Office. Those present agreed on the necessity of an active national organization which would enable the Kolping Society of America to become a viable and lasting entity. As a result of that meeting, the first National Convention was held the following year in New York.

After that convention, the Society made progress in many cities throughout the country. Three new branches, Cincinnati, Brooklyn, and Chicago-South, were founded in 1924. They were followed by Philadelphia and San Francisco in 1925. The Milwaukee branch was also re-established in 1925. The Rochester and Detroit branches were formed in 1926, Buffalo and Los Angeles in 1928, and St. Paul in 1929. The St. Louis branch was re-established in 1929. The Cleveland branch opened in 1930, followed by Newark and Baltimore in 1931. In time, some of these branches ceased to exist because of decreasing German immigration. However, two new branches were founded in the 1980's: Holy Trinity (Passaic, New Jersey) in 1981 and Holy Family (Wilmington, California) in 1987.

The Kolping Society of America has been incorporated in the State of Illinois since 1930 and now has a full-time office managed by its National Administrator.



The tapestry which decorated St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, Italy on the occasion of Fr. Kolping's beatification in 1991.

EPILOGUE

Led by the International Praeses, Monsignor Heinrich Festing, an 80 year effort to recognize the holiness of Father Kolping came to an end on October 27, 1991, when the Holy Father publicly beatified Adolph Kolping. Pope John Paul II declared December 4 the feast day of Blessed Adolph Kolping in the Church's liturgical calendar. Some 80,000 people, from every continent united in St. Peter's Square in Rome to take part in this celebration. In honor of this great occasion, the Kolping Society of America gathered for a Mass of Thanksgiving on November 23, 1991, with our Episcopal Moderator, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin in Chicago.

Today, the Kolping Society continues the work of its founder, Blessed Adolph Kolping. The Society is presently implementing self-help programs tailored to the needs of the people it serves in some 50 countries.