

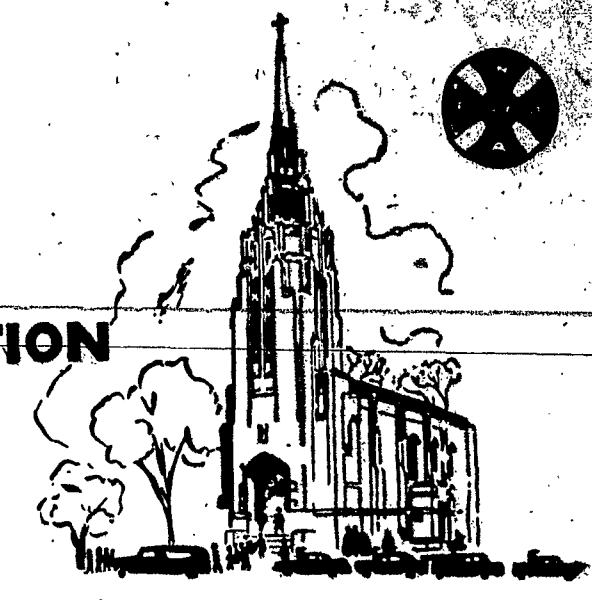
Welcome to Rochester!

ANNUAL STATE CONVENTION

FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

May 13-14-15

1957



With a Bow to Fr. Lord

This saintly priest of the Society of Jesus is remembered and loved by people of many faiths as one of the greatest humanitarians of our time. It is fitting indeed that the Jesuit's warm interpretation of the function of today's Funeral Director should be widely read in connection with the convention of New York State Funeral Directors here in Rochester. Our profession lost a colorful champion in this life, but gained a Heavenly Counsellor ... when Father Lord passed quietly away on January 15, 1956 in St. Louis, Mo., of lung cancer. We take this opportunity to welcome the out-of-town directors convened here ... and in memory of the benevolence of the late Father Daniel A. Lord S.J. ... with a bow to his devotion to the causes of others. May the projects of our assembly be productive to the high ethical standards he so humanly expressed in regard to our time-honored profession.

ALONG THE WAY

by the REV. DANIEL A. LORD, S. J.

With a Bow to Undertakers

I believe the currently approved name is Funeral Directors—which certainly is more concrete and self-explanatory. But whatever their name, they are a wonderful race, and I think we should tender them a seldom-given but apparently always-deserved bow.

I don't know much about the undertakers of past days. But those of the present day, at least those I have met in connection with Catholic funerals, are men who know their difficult profession and carry it out with grace, tact, and sensitive dignity. They are little short of being psychic. They guess what is wanted and what is going to be wanted. They anticipate needs; they suggest ways of making the hours following death easier. They are on the spot whenever they are wanted; they have a sort of protective coloring that seems to make them fade away when you don't want them around.

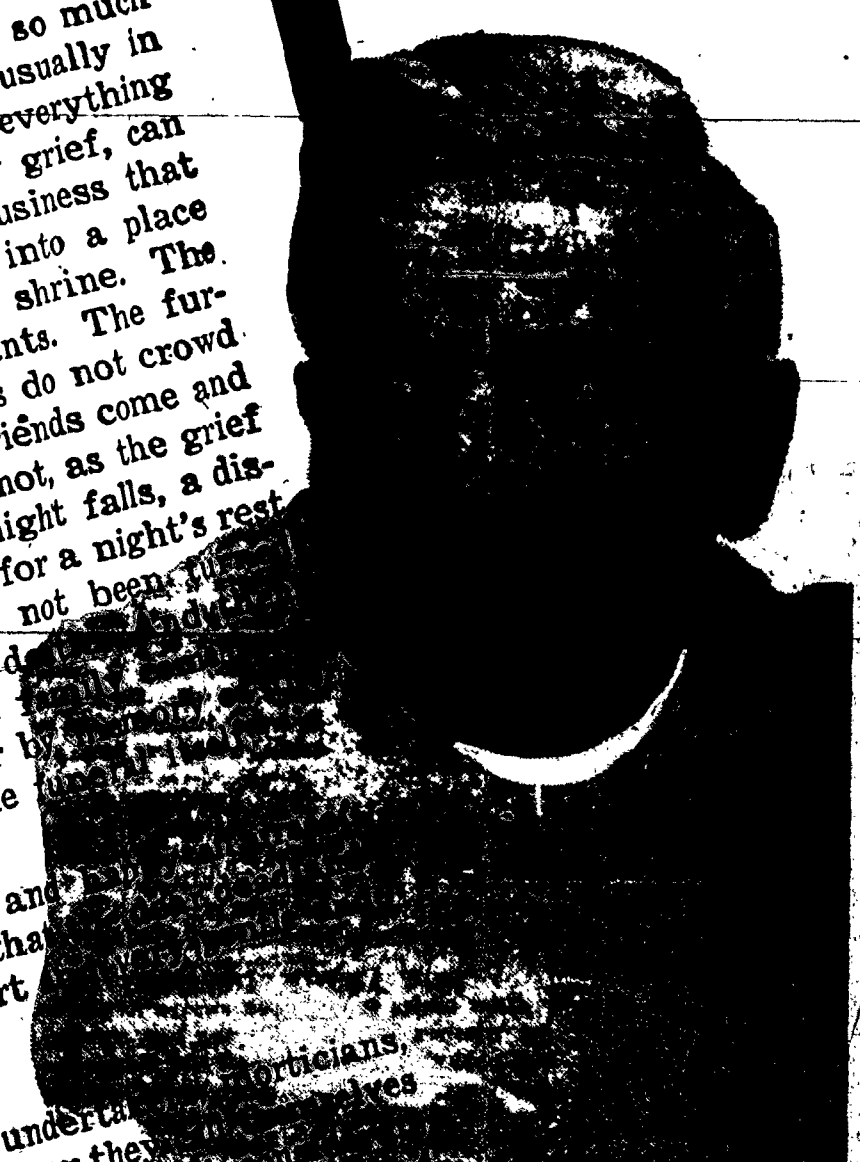
To begin with, one of the real developments of civilization has been the funeral parlor, the funeral home, whatever it happens to be called. Who of us but recalls the grim disorderliness of funerals in those days we like to call simpler, though they might with more reason be called more harrowing. Death, which should be followed with dignity and calm and a chance for prayer and happy memories of the dead, was the signal for confusion amounting almost to chaos. The living room was torn to pieces. If the family furniture was not sufficient, it was supplemented by rows of cane chairs which already had a way of suggesting tombstones. (Thornton Wilder actually made them serve that purpose in *Our Town*.) The casket, after mysterious disappearances and reappearances of the "remains," was borne into the living room, utterly inadequate for this new and disturbing piece of furniture. Flowers arrived and were stowed where there was room. Then the phone was muffled and the doorbell silenced, and someone of the family had to stand as perpetual usher while the visitors flowed and ebbed.

Well, the funeral directors do it all so much better now. Their funeral homes are usually in excellent taste, quiet, dignified, with everything cared for by men who, untouched by grief, can devote themselves entirely to the business that must follow death. The casket fits into a place that might have been made for a shrine. The door is answered by silent attendants. The furniture is comfortable. The flowers do not crowd the mourners out of the room. Friends come and go, can be met by the family or not, as the grief of the family indicates. When night falls, a discrete rule sends everyone home for a night's rest and quiet in a home that has not been disturbed by the advent of death. The topsyturvy by the funeral is over, the casket to a house undisturbed either by the family or by the debris of the funeral.

And all through the sad and death, you had the feeling that you yourself were in expert, experienced hands.

I bow respectfully to undertakers these days. They are a gentle profession. They are men who take the grimness from the death. There is something a little priestly about the body which presupposes a resurrection. They have learned to make death seem—as it should—calm, beautiful, dignified, a quiet sleep from which there is a sure awakening.

There was really no place where the grief-stricken family could escape by day—or far, far into the night. You couldn't very well put



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