

## Father Stafford

Following is the text of the sermon by Very Rev. Msgr. Joseph J. Stafford, pastor of the Episcopal Mass of the Holy Trinity, St. Thomas, St. Francis, and St. Joseph's Holy Cross Church, Ovid, and Sacred Heart Church, Monticello. Father Stafford died Aug. 27. His funeral was held Aug. 30 in the Ovid Church.

In speaking of the priesthood, St. Paul said, "The priest is the steward of the mysteries of God." For most of this century, the dear priest, Father Stafford, whose body lies here this morning, was the father of this whole spiritual family.

There are, my dear friends, notes of comfort to be found in this sorrowful family occasion. It is indeed, and is in a real sense, a family occasion. For most of this century, the dear priest, Father Stafford, whose body lies here this morning, was the father of this whole spiritual family.

In many instances, he regenerated spiritual life through baptism into a couple of generations of the same natural family in this community. He has helped us to begin life, and go through it. He has helped us see our loved ones out of this life and into the next.

Speaking of the natural as well as the spiritual family, we pause again to renew our expression of sympathy to our beloved sister, who at the close of her life has found herself doing what she did at the beginning and through the years.

She has completed the task of looking after and caring for her younger brother. We trust, and we know, that she has been comforted in his bitter moment by the blessed memory of his priestly life and even more by the memory of his holy and priestly death.

We know that during the years, and especially in his recent declining days, and in his illness, she has been comforted and consoled by the absolutely selfless devotion of those entrusted with his care.

As members of his spiritual family we are grateful to Almighty God, first of all, in the same way as in our natural family we are grateful to Him, for a good father. In our spiritual family we find comfort in this moment, as so many of us are proud and happy to have been able to do in our natural family, to thank Almighty God for the great gift of a good father. We are also happy and comforted to know that so many of our friends and neighbors, who admired him almost as much as we loved him, have come to be with us this morning as we say our last farewell.

It is characteristic of a moment like this that we are moved to reminisce.

The vivid memory of all the years he spent among us makes it easy to see the boy before the turn of the century, several years before the turn of the century, the boy whom the finger of God has touched, who started then to direct his steps toward the door of the great St. Bernard's Seminary, which had just been opened. Having passed through those doors as a student, he came forth from them in 1904 as an ordained priest of God.

We know that, as he stood at the Altar offering his First Mass, as every priest does, he wondered why—why—how, had God chosen him? Why, out of so many, so much more capable human subjects, why did God say to him—"You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you?"

I feel sure that a few short years ago when we gathered with him to thank God for fifty years in the priesthood, as he offered that Mass of Thanksgiving, he was still asking himself that question, and even then he could find no answer. We are sure he had then the hope that he had when he entered the seminary, when he answered the summons, that he had read correctly and lived the lines as I quoted them for you this morning, that he had

done the things St. Paul declared are most required of a steward, that he had been, through those long years, trustworthy and loyal, and true.

If, on that occasion, or any other, he had asked us, we could have given him the answer, we would have told him that he had been true, that he had been trustworthy and that he had been loyal—and that it would be a long time before we would stop thanking God for having such a spiritual Father.

His first six years in the priesthood were spent in the city of Auburn, and the next seven years in the city of Elmira. He came here in 1917. We know the story and feel good to remember it. His image will long adorn the walls of our memories.

Our hearts glow and our pride grows as we recall the life and deeds of this saintly man who never achieved the headlines among the world's great because he was too busy staying home and being great—a great father to his family.

Like so many uncounted thousands of parish priests and fathers—He had in abundant measure the heart of a priest and the heart of a father, and did, as they did more to spread the teachings of Christ, to keep human hearts beating rightly, did more actual good for the world of men, than many who have marked that world more deeply.

We have watched him through all the years. We have known that his heart was even stronger than it was weak, even more generous than it was flustered in these recent years. We have known that there were few corners in this part of the world which had not felt the beat of that heart.

Neither we nor anyone could ever know the extent of the influence of his priestly hand, of the Grace he conferred, and the souls he reconciled, and the lives he regenerated at the font, for whom he provided the spiritual food, prepared them and set them forth into marriage, and helped them over the rough places in life's path, those he prepared for death—it would take a long time even to remember, much less to record the list, the record, of the death of this our good Father. We would not be worthy and we could not have the words to do him justice.

In this moment of grief we take our comfort from what he has been, our saintly Father.

We ask—what we feel sure is true—we ask God to look down upon him, and we express the hope that He has already welcomed his soul into heaven. We are sure that Almighty God has said, as we would say, "Well done my good and faithful servant, you have been a servant of Christ, a true and just steward, a worthy servant of God."

Father Stafford, may God welcome you into everlasting, eternal peace.

## Mutual Aid Builds Berlin Chapel

Berlin (NC)—Protestant youths joined Catholics in erecting a pilgrimage chapel at Alt-Buchhorst in the Soviet sector of this former German capital. The chapel was the fulfillment of a vow made by Catholic young men's groups of the diocese in May, 1934, at the time when the Nazi persecution of the Church was first felt.



## Arrange Mission Meet

Washington (NC)—Mail is heavy and problems plenty at the Mission Secretariat three days as 600 foreign missionaries prepare to meet for a three-day session in Washington, D.C., Sept. 8-11. American missionaries from all corners of the world will discuss methods to advance faith on mission frontiers. Busy at work are Miss Lois Waters, formerly of Palmyra and Rochesterian Miss Irene Simone.

## Priest Says

# 'Pull Of Divine Truth' Made Three Million American Converts

Notre Dame (NC)—The pull of divine truth upon the open mind has led 2,180,296 converts into the Church in this country in the last 21 years, according to Father John A. O'Brien, research professor at the University of Notre Dame and author of several widely used books of convert making. In 1935 the average number of converts per priest per year in the United States was 2.3, while last year's figure was 2.8.

The gaining of 2,180,296 converts in those 21 years is a creditable accomplishment, Father O'Brien pointed out, but the number must be notably increased if any appreciable percentage of the 70 million churchless or the 100 million non-churchgoing people are to be won.

That the national average can be considerably increased is evidenced from the numbers won by individual parishes and dioceses, Father O'Brien said. While some parishes regularly receive 60 or more, others of the same size and in the same dioceses range in average per priest from 2.15 to .09, he stated.

Why the difference? Investigation discloses that the parishes and dioceses with large annual averages are the ones with a carefully worked-out

convert program, featuring well-publicized inquiry classes three or four times a year, with parishioners enlisted as recruiters, according to Father O'Brien.

The others wait for a stray individual to screw up enough courage to come alone to the rectory and apply for instruction. This most non-Catholics are hesitant and even reluctant to do, especially if they are not sure in advance that they will

embrace the Faith, he said.

"If BUSINESS firms followed this policy," remarked Father O'Brien, "they would land in bankruptcy before the year was out, while salesmen would starve to death. What is badly needed in most parishes and dioceses is a definite, carefully planned program for winning converts and reclaiming fallen-aways, instead of leaving it to chance, accident or happenstance."

## Jersey Catholic Schools \$20 Million Tax Saving

Trenton (NC)—The Catholic school system of the Diocese of Trenton saved the taxpayers of New Jersey \$18,410,000 in the 1956-57 school year, it was estimated here.

Another \$20 million will be saved during the coming school year, it was estimated, based on increased enrollments.

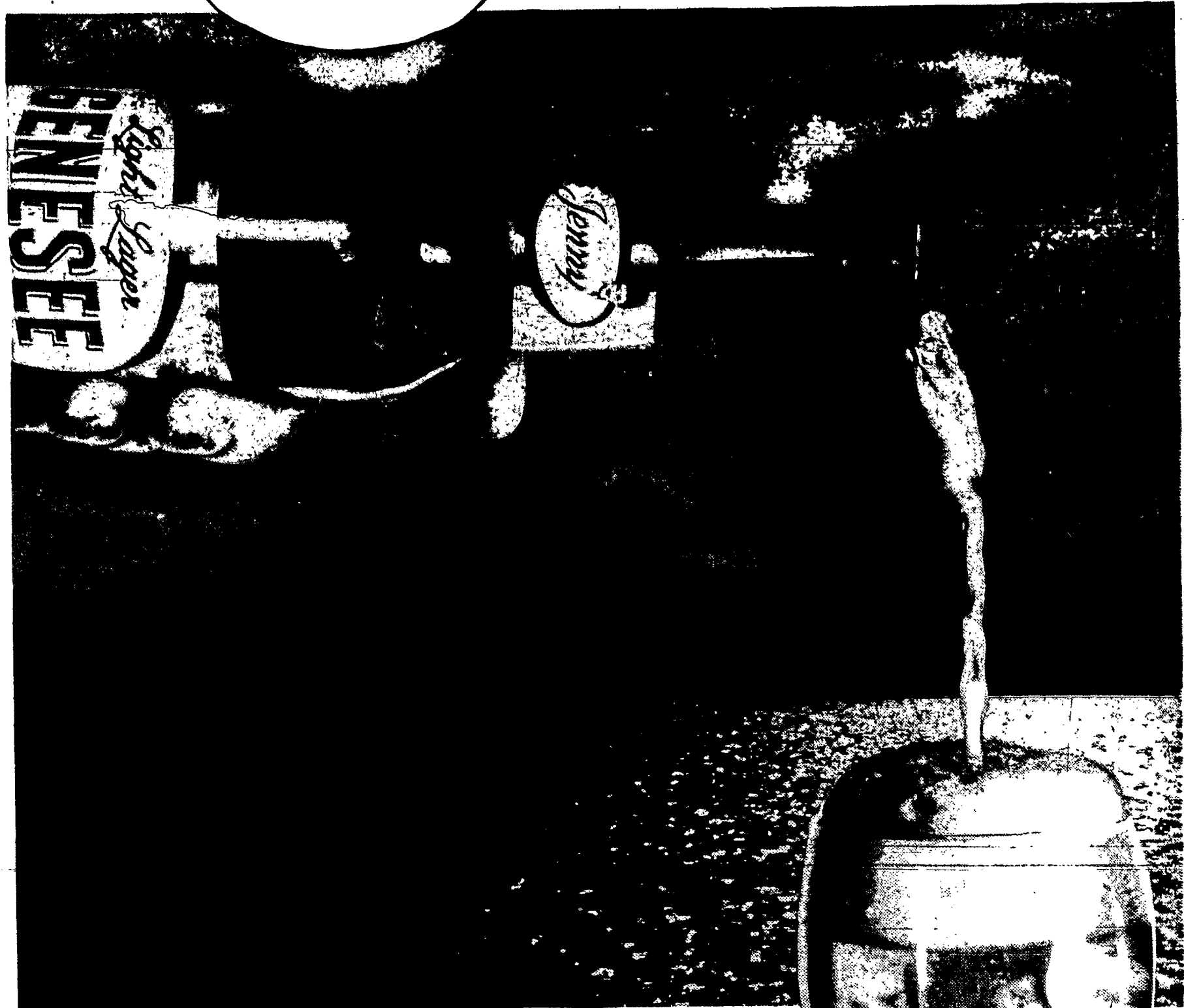
The figures were made available by Msgr. John J. Enderbrock, diocesan superintendent of

schools. The Diocese of Trenton, which embraces eight counties, operated 87 elementary schools and eight secondary schools last year.

Beginning with the new school year, two new diocesan high schools will bring the secondary schools total to 10, and two new elementary schools will bring the educating an elementary or sec-

ondary student in the 1956-57 year. The Diocese of Trenton, which embraces eight counties, operated 87 elementary schools and eight secondary schools last year.

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