

A Look At The Old-Time Funeral

By FATHER ROBERT F. McNAMARA

Burial of the dead is an act of great charity, and an act of great faith as well, when performed in a Christian context. But there is perhaps none of our popular practices, even weddings, that is subject to so many abuses as the funeral. Probably because, as St. Augustine wrote centuries ago, funeral rites are "rather a solace for the living than a help to the dead." It is the living, not the deceased, who are prone to engage in objectionable practices.

In the last century morticians were less well trained. The role of funeral director was closely associated with the role of cabinet maker, for it was normally the furniture maker who both made the coffin and supervised the entombment.

Older citizens will recall that even as recently as forty or fifty years ago, especially in smaller towns, one often saw above the door of a store: "Furnishings and Undertaking." In 1923, a Mr. Van Buskirk of Hirschfelds advertised in the Elmira Democrat that he provided furnishings, rugs, and funeral direction.

In Rochester itself, there was more of an opportunity for a person to set up as a full-time undertaker. In the 1867-1868 Rochester Directory, Charles Jeffrey, Sexton and Undertaker, advertised that his office was "open at all hours, night and day," and that he had on hand a full stock of "roswood, black walnut and cheap coffins and caskets," shrouds of all descriptions, and other appointments. The Catholic partners, Balthasar Minzes and John Mayer, stated in the same directory that they had lately opened, and were available for funeral direction. They, too, were ready to furnish horse-drawn hearse and carriages for obsequies — "reasonably," they added.

During the 1850's, the American Catholic bishops became very much exercised about unseemly funeral practices that had risen among their people. In June, 1861, the bishops of the New York Province issued a joint pastoral letter in which they devoted some space to this trend. "In all parts of our country," they said, "both clergy and laity have lamented the abuses which so frequently occur at funerals, by which a holy act of religion is degraded into an act of ostentation and unseemly display, sometimes even into an occasion of revelry and rioting."

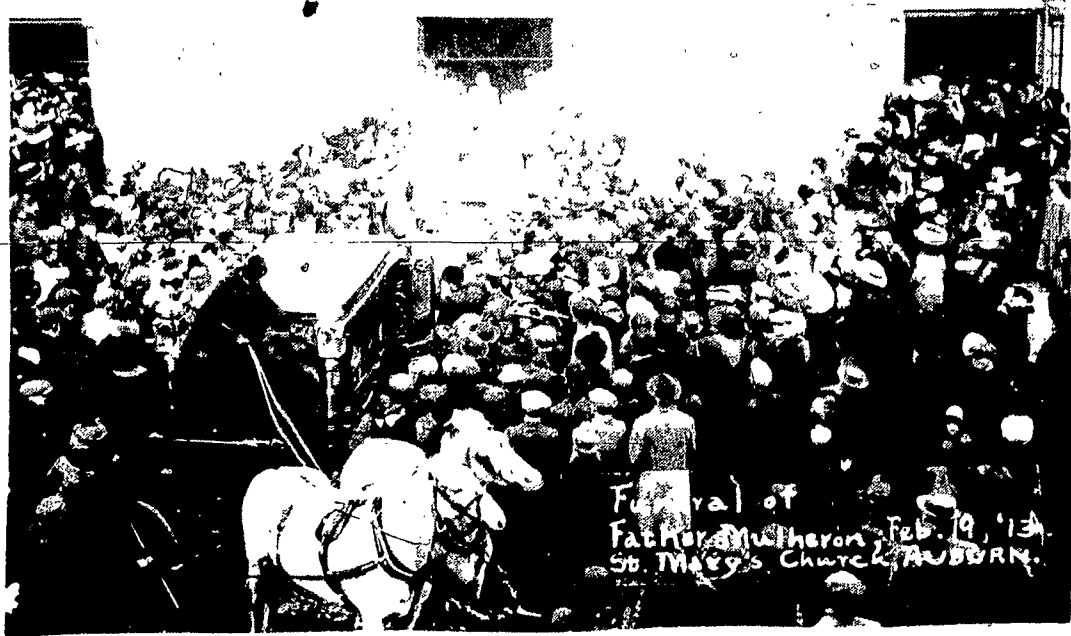
Part of the complaint was against the growing custom of spending "too much on flowers and premises which was considered more pious than Christian." The Thirtieth Provincial Council of New York (1886) protested strongly about this. Masses, prayer and fasting were a far greater benefit to the departed.

The same Council's denunciation of "crowded wakes" was even stronger. This custom, largely of Irish origin, made of the vigil of the dead a social event which could easily get out of hand. Bishop Hayley of Newark, as early as 1856, had called it the "un-Christian custom of Wakes."

It was going to be hard to uproot quickly the abuses that arose from waking the dead. But the American bishops fought an even more active battle against the use of many carriages at funerals.

Most Catholics, in the old days, were accustomed to follow the body of the deceased on foot to its place of burial. This was still easy in America when the churchyard was close to the church itself. But here the cemetery was more likely to be on the outskirts of the town, at some distance from the church building. Immediate relatives and elderly mourners were in this case obliged to ride in carriages. What happened, however, was that apparently most of the mourners at non-Catholic funerals rode in carriages, and going by carriage thus became a sort of status symbol. The trouble was that the family of the deceased had to pay for the rental of these carriages, and poor immigrant families could scarcely afford such unnecessary display. (As late as 1912, the Diocesan Synod of Kansas City declared that any funeral that cost over 20 per cent of the annual revenue of a family was plainly excessive. The problem must have been that bad, if not worse, in the 1850's.)

To add insult to injury, many of the people who rode to funerals behaved in a most unseemly manner. En route, they talked loud, laughed, and sometimes even drank. At the graveyard they did not bother to get



An Auburn Funeral in 1913

out of the conveyances. They would likewise be punished by behaved equally badly on the return trip.

Not a few bishops in the mid-1800's decided to lay down strong rules to regulate the number of carriages permitted at Catholic funerals. The Bishop of Pittsburgh said two, no more; let all other mourners walk.

Bishop Timon of Buffalo, who was also bishop of the present Rochester diocesan area from 1847 to 1867, laid down his funeral rules. In his diocesan synod of 1854, he decreed that there should be no more than five carriages in Catholic funeral processions. This he intended to enforce with penalties until it caught on. A major excommunication was threatened to those "who by drunkenness or quarrels, give scandal at wakes or funerals." And he promised that other infractions

of the conveyances. They would likewise be punished by behaved equally badly on the return trip.

McMullen's funeral in Rochester. The priest in charge was suspended from his priestly faculties for three months, a lay couple was excluded from Holy Communion for a year, fines were imposed upon three church institutions and upon each priest who took part in the obsequies. But it was usually the clergy who felt the brunt of enforcement. Suspension for a greater or lesser period was the most frequent penalty, but fines were also used. Thus when several priests rode to the burial of the brother of Father Edward in an excessive number of hacks, Timon fined them according to their guilt, on a scale running from \$10 to \$25.

In 1868, the Bishop reached

the conclusion that his effort had been sufficiently successful, so he asked his clergy, gathered in retreat, whether he should not perhaps rescind the unpopular ruling. The clergy, rather to his surprise, seemed to favor its retention. He took occasion of the same meeting to urge his priests to outlaw the use of musical bands at funerals.

It is questionable, however, whether in his generation the first bishop of Buffalo could completely uproot practices so deeply rooted in emotion.

In 1872, the first bishop of Rochester, Bernard J. McQuaid, faced the same problem of funeral abuses. Among other burial regulations, he ruled that "twelve carriages and no more shall be allowed at a funeral." It was an implicit admission that Timon had failed after all in the "battle of the carriages."

He and his successors in the See of Rochester have continued to legislate against current abuses in popular burial practices, but the question of the number of conveyances used and the decorous behavior of the mourners are no longer at issue.

What finally rendered the carriage problem irrelevant was the greater prosperity of Catholics and the increase in the number of privately owned carriages (and later, automobiles) which would be brought by the mourners themselves. Improprieties there often are at funerals in our own day, but they are usually of a rather different nature, even though they still spring from "solace to the living" rather than from help to the dead.

Sister Attends Conference

Sister Mary Beatrice, S.S.N.D., will attend the 13th Educational Conference of the School Sisters of Notre Dame the week of August 14 at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland.

Sister Mary Beatrice is on the faculty of St. Joseph's Business School.



PICK A BERRY!

ROYAL'S EXCLUSIVE BLACKBERRY GELATIN...so fresh tasting, you'd think it had just been picked. And only Royal has Vitamin C! Pick some up...soon!

Need HELP?
GENERAL MAINTENANCE
LAWN CARE
CLEANING etc.

C.Y.O. JOB PLACEMENT

In cooperation with Inner-City Parishes the C.Y.O. will act as a clearing house between young men with working permits and prospective employers. C.Y.O. is not acting as employer and does not assume any obligations in employer-employee matters.

Those who wish to hire young men for a minimum of three (3) hours at the minimum wage of \$1.25 per hour are asked to call CYO.

Phone **454-2030**
Mr. Joseph Judge

Call Mon. thru Fri. between 9 and 5

Rochester's ROOF RAISING Specialists

"WE RAISE THE ROOF"

Making Room for the Area's Expanding Population

- FAMILY ROOMS
- RANCH ROOF'S RAISED
- ADDITIONS
- FIREPLACES
- KITCHENS
- BATHROOMS
- SIDING-PAINTING
- ROOFING
- DECORATING
- COLOR STYLING
- RUGS & DRAPERIES
- HEATING
- AIR CONDITIONING

FREE Instant Estimate Call **865-3150** **865-9594**

EMPLOYEES INSURED and BONDED

R. J. FINNEGAN COMPANY INC.

Look! WE ARE NOW IN OUR NEW and LARGER HOME **2485 DEWEY AVE.**

Stop in and see us! We'll be glad to see you!

"Watch Our Trucks Go By"

Drive a bargain with Hertz this weekend.

Only \$15.00 and 12¢ a mile

rents a Ford Galaxie or similar sedan from Friday noon to Monday noon. (And this low weekend rate includes insurance, gas, and oil.)

Let Hertz put you in the driver's seat. (Isn't that where you belong?) For details, call: **546-7722**



MOM - DAD BOYS and GIRLS

WATCH

For The Annual

BACK TO SCHOOL GUIDE

A Special Supplement To The

COURIER

Journal

AUGUST 25th

MR. ADVERTISER

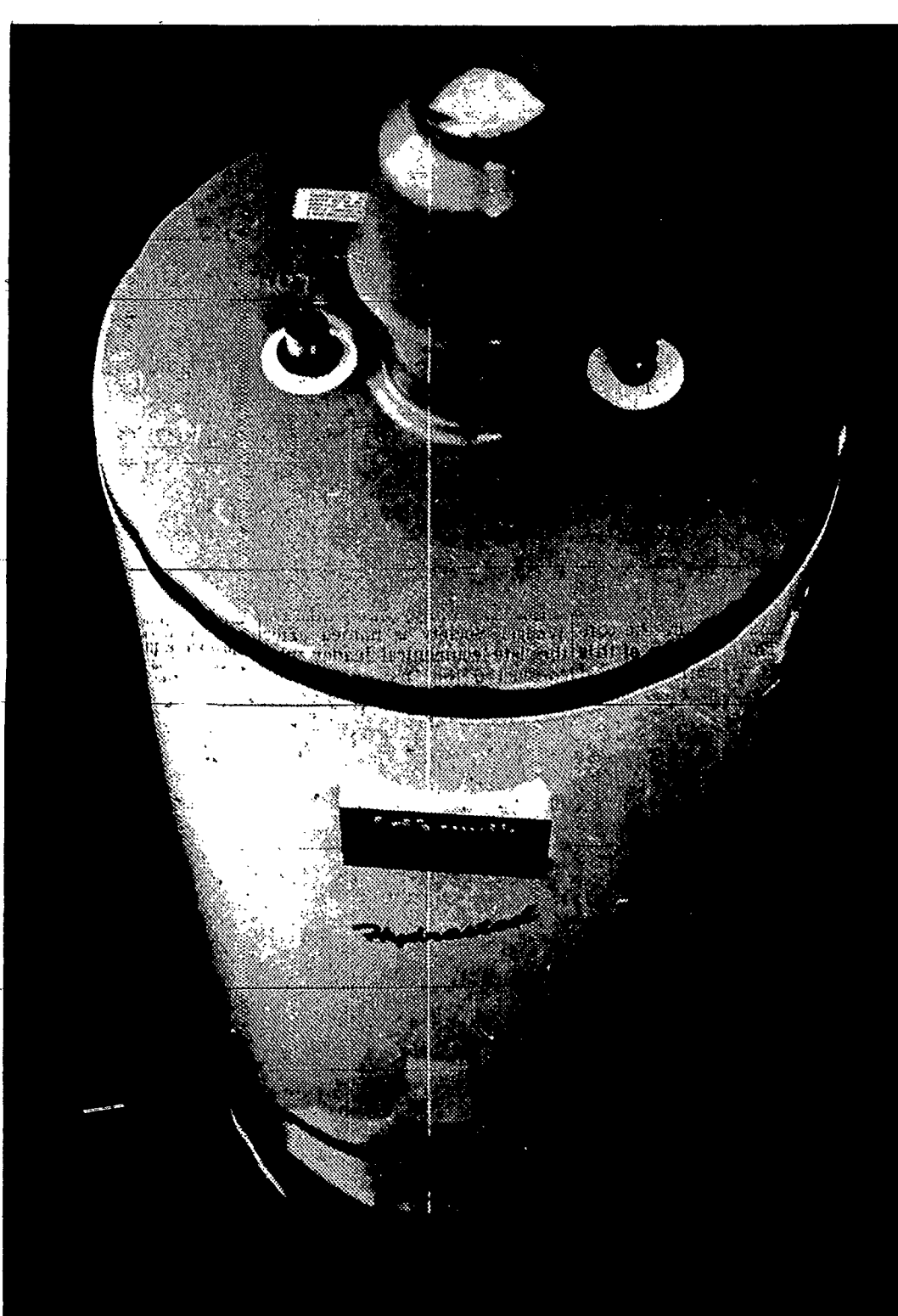
If You Haven't Reserved Space in This Special Supplement Time Is Running Out

CALL 454-7050 FOR A REPRESENTATIVE

S. D. LUNT & CO.
Members New York Stock Exchange
Assoc. Members Amer. Stock Ex.

★ BROKERS AND DEALERS IN LISTED AND UNLISTED SECURITIES
★ WESTERN N.Y. INDUSTRIES
★ COMPLETE TRADING FACILITIES

WILLIAM E. SECOR
Phone 232-4084
1414 Lincoln Roch. Trust Bldg. Rochester, N.Y. 14604



The Water Heater for the Growing Family

Active growing families need lots of hot water. There's many, many, baths, many, many washings and much, much cleaning to be done. And, as the family grows, so grow the number of helpful appliances to make life easier. Soon an automatic dishwasher is added, then a newer and bigger washer—all to keep you, your family and your home as neat as a pin.

But many times, as you grow, your old water heater seems to shrink. You find you're running out of hot water right in the middle of a shower, or the water isn't hot enough for the second batch of clothes. If this is the case—now is the time to switch to the water heater that grows with your family—an A. O. Smith Permaglas gas water heater.

Because A. O. Smith is quality constructed throughout, it's able to keep up with your growing demands. The glass lining is built to take the numerous changes that occurs when converting cold water to hot. And the thick blanket of insulation keeps the hot water in the tank—where you want it!

So, if your old water heater can't keep up with your growing family—stop in and see us. We'll see that you get an A. O. Smith that grows with you.

10 Year Guarantee

If within the 10-year period your tank leaks or you have rusty water due to a defect in the glass lining, you will receive a new water heater free. On any heater purchased after October 1, 1965 installation will also be free within 5 years of purchase.

A. O. Smith
Permaglas Gas Water Heater

\$149⁹⁵

30 Gallon Model
Includes Delivery and Normal Installation
Budget Terms — As Low as \$5.00 a Month

Open Tues. and Thurs. till 9 — Closed Saturdays during July & August

RG&E ROCHESTER GAS and ELECTRIC PHONE 546-2700
AN INVESTOR OWNED COMPANY WITH MORE THAN 26,000 SHAREHOLDERS 89 EAST AVE.



George J. Fennell
is among 35 high University Theatre technicians

Weigel U Interfaith

Faulkner, Md. — (R) Thirty-seven Episcopal, an, Methodist and clergymen participated sixth annual ecumenical here held under auspices Gustave Weigel Society

The two-day spiritual took place at the Jesuits' Loyola-on-Potomac treat House and was led Protestant and Catholic men.

Basilians Meet Discuss Renew

The 1967 General Chapter of the Basilian Fathers held at John Fisher College, on August 5 after four weeks of intensive reflection and discussion of the religious life and the works of this congregation. The chapter was to carry on some twenty-five matters bearing on all as their life and work in the world. The main chapter was to carry on the appropriate renewal by the Church and through in many ways. Some recommendations issued by the Chapter concerned the government, control of the admission, the incorporation of new novices and missions.

The Basilians are a greater autonomy for of their community, a recommendation that lay be added to boards of schools and colleges of Basilian priests. The even opened the door for such institutions religious or laity rather than the order itself.

Prospective members order will hereafter be to enter "an informal" with the order their college years and their novitiate and the studies thereafter, rather present novitiate-collegiate sequence.

U.S. Mission In Tanzania

Dar Es Salaam — (R) Father William J. C. Maxymoni, priest from er, Mass., has been named as the Tanzania U.S. Conference's Welfare ment and assistant to ference's secretary general.

REC

Yes, we will n

LIFE IN

The high rate You will help You will receive remembrances Substantial Ta

Information held strict confidence

WRITE TODAY TO

REV. FAT
316 N