

On The Right Side

Two Men We'll Miss

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



Recently our diocese lost two fine priests, sons of deeply religious families.

Father Joseph O'Connell was ordained in 1934. Before his ordination I predicted: "Joe, you won't last 15 years. You'll burn yourself out." He did not slow down, and he enjoyed reminding me of the prediction, wrong by 21 years. He was wiry, vivacious, optimistic, devout, loving — and loveable. He always remembered with great simplicity that he was a special person, namely, a priest. He used to exhaustion his many gifts to serve God through the Church and through his priesthood; and to serve The People.

Msgr. Edward Ball was ordained in 1921. He first taught at Aquinas. In the late twenties Auburnian Father William O'Brien and I were seminarians at St. Andrew's Seminary, and lived in Sts. Peter and Paul parish with his delightful aunt, Mrs. Eliza Kavanaugh Harrigan. Each Sunday night he came for dinner. The dedication of his early priesthood I observed with interest; but as the years rolled on I realized facets of his goodness which maturity brought me to appreciate.

He was a priceless amalgam of droll humor and of a conscientiousness which bordered on scrupulosity. I well remember how seriously he replaced in the parish office drawer a five-cent stamp he had borrowed for a personal letter. Yet that same man enthralled his assistants and visitors and parishioners with a humor, both in mimicry and in funny word-twistings, to lighten hearts which often needed mirth and understanding.

Although most of their priesthood was spent in parish work, each had assignments for many years with high schoolers. Their personal devotion drew a discipleship from their students. In their parishes they were the finest of shepherds to people of all ages, because they were faithful priests and loyal friends.

I attended both funerals: Father O'Connell's in Lima; Msgr. Ball's in Geneva. And I admired equally the fine sermons: one by Bishop Kearney and the other by Msgr. Maney, and the sublime music at both funerals.

Since Father O'Connell had served the girls at Nazareth Academy, it was fitting that the Academy Perosian Choir should sing. The four-part music lofted that peculiar spiritual harmony and lightness which is integral to authentic Church music.

The music at St. Francis De Sales, Geneva was a tremendous congregational accomplishment. Under the direction of Commentator Mr. Peter Caito, the virile voices from a great crowd of priests and the rich voices of the Sisters of St. Joseph swept the mourning laity along into a great musical acclaim to God's glory and to the fact of the Resurrection. At the Pater Noster the accomplished organist unexpectedly pealed first notes of Maillot's majestic Lord's Prayer.

Later I learned that this has been sung for ten years at St. Francis, where music is held in esteem. The surprise of the congregation of visiting priests and nuns and laity brought no hesitation, but with one voice they began with delicate reverence, rolled on in earnest petition, and ended with the triumphant doxology: "for Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever," subsiding with a softening "Amen" like the folding of the wings of the Seraphim, adoring before the throne of God.

What reaches deeper into men's souls than genuine spiritual music, excepting martyrdom, witnessed or endured?

Of these two good priests the words of Lacordaire on the priesthood apply to perfection:

To be a member of every family, yet belong to none; to bless and be blessed forever!

O God, what a life is yours, O priest of Jesus Christ."

Salting the Earth

Committed Christians

By Father John Hempel

Another Lent has slipped by. The death-life theme of Holy Week is but a memory. The question to be asked by all is: Am I a more committed Christian because of this Lent?

This year, Bishop Hogan set the stage for Lent with his distinction between "cheap" and "costly grace."

The Liturgical Commission built on this by sending out some excellent guidelines on themes and activities for Lent. One activity that could and should have been most helpful in beginning to understand the problem of poverty was the "sharing supper." In itself one shared meal is not going to make the poor no longer poor, yet within the context of that meal a tremendous amount of education and understanding could have been realized.

The homily theme suggested for the first Sunday of Lent referred to the sharing supper. Some of the thoughts contained in the suggested homily are most worthy of repetition: "It is we as a society who have the

real potential of massive, effective programs to bring about a solution to abject poverty in our community, our country and our world. Each of us can start with himself to first root out any hidden prejudices that could dissuade us from action. Here we can support monetarily and actively, legislation at all levels of government which impinge on poverty and actively support other voluntary efforts which help those in need. We need also take an interest in the administration of community programs to see that the poor are truly served by our common efforts. Then our symbolic 'shared supper' will flower from symbol to reality."

I wonder how many parishes in our diocese made an effort to bring this message to their people. For those who neglected a sharing supper, an opportunity was lost to share the fullness of the Christian message; for those who took it seriously there was an opportunity to help our people become committed Christians.

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