

Father Bradler:

The Priest With Three Uniforms

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Meet the man in black and blue.

Depending on what he's doing, Father Robert Bradler, assistant pastor at Holy Rosary parish and chaplain for the Rochester Fire Department, could be wearing his black clerical garb, a black rubber firefighter's outfit or the dark blue fireman's dress uniform.

He's unique as far as fire department chaplains are concerned. How many can claim a father and a brother as firemen? His father, Clarence Bradler, has been with the fire department 36 years and drives Engine 2 for the firehouse on Clinton Ave. His brother Paul, began his career as a firefighter 4 years ago and works on University Ave.

Since he was appointed chaplain in 1969 by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen he's loved every minute of it. It's easy to tell Father Bradler is the son of a fireman. His interest in the men and their equipment is the interest born of years of contact.

He lends his talents as a person and a priest in several ways. He's called on every fire that's two alarms or more and sleeps with a special radio that receives only fire calls near his bed.

Depending on what his schedule is the next day, it's not unusual for him to get up and go to a 2 or 3 a.m. fire and get back in time for morning Mass and a full day of activities.

"I have no trouble getting up," he smiles, "but even if I would get back in time to go back to bed I usually can't go back to sleep anyhow."

He feels his presence at fires is necessary and has a purpose. "I'm there to be of help to the firemen in case they're injured. A lot of times someone is also injured in the burning building but my main concern is for the firefighters."

Although Father goes to many fires he's had no formal firefighting training and normally doesn't go into a burning building.

But like the firefighters themselves, he's always prepared and travels with his rubber firefighter's outfit, boots and helmet in the trunk of his car at all times.

He's a member of the New York State Association of Fire Chaplains and is also spiritual director of the Firefighter's Holy Name Society. In addition he makes numerous appearances at social functions, during Fire Prevention Week in October, at firehouse dedications and at funerals of firefighters or their families.

"However, in all my time with the department as chaplain we've lost no one in a fire," he says thankfully.

Father Bradler is also chaplain for the retired firefighters who meet every third Thursday of the month. And, he acts as counselor for any man, retired or active, who feels he needs someone to talk to.

His numerous activities for the fire department and concern for firefighters has made him a well known and welcome figure around fire stations throughout the city.

And what does Father have to say about his work as chaplain?

"I really enjoy it," he says modestly, "and it isn't that time consuming."



Father Bradler stops to chat with firefighters Samuel DeVola, [left], Ric and Frederic Stark.



Aerial ladders are given an annual safety test by firefighters at the Fire Training Academy on Scottsville Rd. to make sure they haven't suffer fatigue or other problems in the line of duty. Walter Hauser, [far left], will lend a hand while Sam Obi, [left], Paul Mascari, [with glove on], supervises fire equipment and maintenance and Robert Meyers, [background], measuring stick. Robert MacKay makes sure the stick is level on the ladder. Gene Fields tops the ladder. Battalion Chief Donald Pifer watches from the ground.



It's a long way up

but it's still 100 feet of ladder no matter how long it is