



Redemptorist Stephen O'Connor was one of the best known Air Force chaplains during the Korean conflict of the '50s. He and a Jesuit father were a team who travelled, giving missions for Air Force personnel. Today he is assistant to the provincial at 7509 Shore Road, Brooklyn, 11208. This is a recent letter to him.

Dear Father Steve, Father Jim Foley phoned last night from Notre Dame Retreat House, and told me of meeting you at a conference in Brooklyn. It was like recalling a voice from the beyond. And it was a good voice.

Then I began to recall the retreats, or missions you gave. Do you recall the one you gave for us in '56 at Casablanca Air Depot in Morocco, along with a Jesuit — what was his name? White hair, a bit heavy and arbitrary and bellowed like a Southern Baptist preacher. You made a great team. Your own suaviter in modo; his own roaring and threatening. Most effective.

Let me tell you an interesting thing that happened about a month after your mission. It had little to do with your own, excepting indirectly. A 22-year-old airman named Bob White came into the chapel office. I had gotten acquainted with him during hospital visitation on the base, and he was close to a group of active Catholic airmen. By active I do not mean just drinking that awful Moroccan green beer and perhaps chasing a French skirt a bit, but that simple, loyal faith which was the rule rather than the exception before the recent revolution which exalted egocentricity to replace the selflessness of the Gospel spirit. Scene: The Air Force Chapel office.

Said Bob: "I want to become a Catholic."

Said I: "Why? Did you make the Catholic Mission?"

Said he: "No. I did not go to that all. I went to the General Protestant Mission which was held around the same time."

Said I: "Well, what has that got to do with your wanting to be a Catholic?"

Said he: "During the services I looked around. The preacher was a Southern Baptist. I am a Lutheran. Around the chapel were men of a dozen different denominations. I thought to myself: This doesn't make sense. The only religion which historically goes back to Christ is the Catholic religion."

So he took thorough instructions. He had a solid foundation from his Lutheran catechism classes. I think next to the Eastern Orthodox, the Lutherans do the best job of giving solid Christian doctrine to their people. He took the faith well, and in three months became a Catholic. One day he came in all agog. "My sergeant wants to become a Catholic!" "Oh, my gosh! I just haven't the time to take on any more. I'll tell you what. You give the instructions. I'll start him off; give you the books. You instruct him. Then every once in a while I will go over the stuff with him. After all, it's your job as a Catholic to spread the Faith. Not just the priests."

This was a decade before Vatican II's Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity. But I must confess I have found very little in most of the Vatican II documents which was not being done before, where the Church was taken seriously. The sergeant was baptized at the Easter Vigil Midnight Mass in the same chapel where you preached the mission; and Bob White was his proud godfather.

Do you think that Notre Dame Retreat House might not be a good place to have a meeting of our priest-chaplains? You know them all through your missionary work. And we all would be happy to meet one another. Do think it over.

Father Foley said you want a set of Sheen tapes. I send them to you as a gift. All I ask is a prayer; and that you will advertise the conferences with some enthusiasm. It was good to hear from you — after 17 years!

CYO, Youth Council Plan Christmas Fete

The Northwest Regional Youth Council and CYO Youth Director John Turner are planning a Christian celebration at Holy Cross School on Dec. 23 and 24. The central theme will be Christmas Is Giving.

This event is being offered to parish youth groups and adult advisers as a way of bringing together people doing similar work in different parishes.

Each parish youth group participating will do a community service project such as distributing food baskets. This will be done before the evening of Dec. 23. Second, these groups will gather at Holy Cross at 6 p.m. for a get-acquainted session and pizza party. Then the group plans to go caroling. The evening will conclude with a midnight Mass.

Many of the youths will bring sleeping bags and spend the night. After breakfast Tuesday morning, a volley ball tournament will be held between several parishes as a conclusion.

AMBASSADOR RECEIVED

Vatican City [RNS] — Pope Paul received the credentials of the new Venezuelan Ambassador to the Holy See at a special private audience here recently. The veteran diplomat, Dr. Eduardo Tamayo Cascue, was formerly Venezuela's Ambassador to Italy. Roman Catholics in Venezuela number 10,288,000 among a population of 11,500,000.

to a volley ball season they themselves had organized. Hopefully, conditions will be ripe for a snow-sculpturing contest to also take place Tuesday morning.

The CYO is working with Dan O'Mealia, chairman of the Regional Youth Council on the program.

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