

On The Right Side

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Prayer Is Important

It takes no genius to understand that the Catechism is a map and a guide. It is also an epitome of Catholic doctrine, presenting in crystal clear capsule form the great truths of our Faith. However, the catechism without the practice of what it teaches is bootless. Therefore, whenever I preach or teach, the ultimate aim is to encourage listeners to carry out some practice, something they will do.

Thirteen days before Easter I substituted for the teachers of our 5th and 6th grades CCD classes. The youngsters are about 11 and 12 years old, and exceptionally nice. We went over the examination of conscience and how to go to confession. The name has been changed to "the Sacrament of Reconciliation," which sounds so ponderous for little children's souls. Precious few children—or adults—come to be reconciled anyway. Many spiritual writers say that we ought to go to confession once a month.

Toward the end of the CCD class, I said, "I am going to give each of you an Easter present. It is this little gray prayer book called Treasury of Prayers. This is what I want you to do. Each night, from now until Easter night—that's 13 days—I want you to read carefully three different

prayers from this prayer book before you go to bed." Vast numbers of children do not know the ordinary prayers which all Catholics should know, including the Act of Contrition, the Creed, Hail Holy Queen, Morning Offering, Angel of God. Test your children and grandchildren to verify this declaration. So each of the 24 children was given an instrument, the Treasury of Prayer, to put into prayerful action.

It is not enough to give the instrument. It is necessary to follow through. So I asked Mrs. Mary Ann Penlon, our efficient CCD coordinator and niece of Father Stanley Bialaszewski of Bath and Auburn, to get me the name and telephone number of each of the children. She did. So Saturday night at 8, four days after class, I sat down and phoned each of the children. This was a typical call:

Phone rings; someone answers. I speak, "This is Father Cuddy. Is Tim in?"

"Oh, yes. Just a minute, Father." (Background: "Tim, it's the priest.") Tim comes to phone.

"Hello, Tim. This is Father Cuddy. Were you at religious instructions Tuesday?"

"Oh, yes, Father."

"Good. What did I give each of you, and what did I want you to do?"

"You gave us a little prayer book and asked us to say three different prayers each night until after Easter."

"Fine. And how is Tim

doing?" (A cautious pause.)

"Well, I forgot two nights." (Let us admire honesty.)

"O.K. That gives you 50 percent. Now we've had only four nights since Tuesday, so you can get on the stick and continue again tonight. That gives you eight more days to go. Will you do that?"

"Oh, yes, Father. And thank you for calling me."

Now the value of that procedure is multifold. 1--The children were impressed that prayer is important. 2--The families were startled to think that the priest considers prayer so important that he phoned to be sure an important thing is being done. 3--The children are enriching their spiritual ken by becoming familiar with diverse prayers. These prayers not only give grace. They give instruction and direction. 4--The families know there is such a thing as a prayer book available, and that there are many beautiful prayers which can be used to praise God.

One of the calls had this touching incident. A mother answered the phone and called her daughter to answer on an upstairs extension. We had a three-way conversation. As we chatted, the mother said, "I have been saying the prayers with Ellen. Oh, Father. The first night I cried. Those prayers are so beautiful."

This little vignette may be useful for other catechists and parents, to the glory of God and the edification of our children.

Community Hospital Sets Series on Aging

Healthy Aging—How to be in Charge of Your Own Old Age is the title of a three-part series of talks arranged for the general public by Relatives and Friends of Monroe Community Hospital. The meetings will be held over the next three weeks in the hospital's auditorium at 435 E. Henrietta Road. There is no admission charge.

Each session is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. On Tuesday, April 18, Dr. T. Franklin Williams, medical director, will discuss normal body changes that age brings with Carol Brink of the University of Rochester School of Nursing. On Monday, April 24, Dr. Williams's guest will be Dr. Susan Whitborne of the U of R psychology department. They will talk about a positive approach to the aging process.

Healthy Agers I Have Known is the topic set for Tuesday, May 2, with Wanda Brown of the Rochester Recreation Bureau and Florence Carpenter, executive director of the Regional Council on the Aging, as speakers.

The Relatives and Friends of Monroe Community Hospital, a new organization, is concerned with strengthening, and in some cases, renewing, the patients' family ties by drawing others into the social life of the hospital.

RELIGIOUS ART

The Barnabite Fathers at Our Lady of Fatima Shrine in Youngstown, preparing their ninth annual Religious Art Festival, have set July 20 as the entry deadline. Prizes are offered for original oil, acrylic, watercolor and mixed media paintings and for sculpture.

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