

Msgr. Schwab Lauded by Friends 'Humor Has Been His Shield'



Msgr. Schwab walks in procession with Bishop Joseph L. Hogan and Father Francis Davis at a Mass of Thanksgiving for the monsignor's 60 years of service in the priesthood.

By HARRY P. SEEBACK

Not long after coming to Elmira in 1966 to live in retirement, among the first persons I met was Msgr. Schwab and we became friends and that friendship has continued to this day and it is nothing less than a blessing upon me. In penning a tribute to this man of God, one at first is inclined to extoll his priestly qualities. But with people in our diocese and beyond sending messages of congratulations on the 60th anniversary of his ordination, offering

Masses, other prayers, a reception and dinner tells us conclusively that he is known, appreciated and beloved. There is, however, a side of his personality that may not be so widely known and that is his delightful sense of humor. The poet Thomas Hood tells us "The sense of humor is the just balance of all the faculties of man, the best security against the pride of knowledge and the councils of the imagination, the strongest inducement to submit with a wise and pious patience to the vicissitudes of human

existence."

Known or unknown to him, this counsel has served Msgr. Schwab well over his many years, for surely he has had his share of trials and tribulations. Truly humor has been his shield, not the humor that springs from the head but from the heart, the source from which comes his love of God and his fellow man. So heartfelt and prayerful congratulations to you Msgr. Schwab, pastor and friend on your anniversary and our thanks for our sharing in your priestly life.

'A Truly Loyal Priest of the Church'

By SISTER MARY MARGARET HAMMERL, OP

Life is a journey, a moving forward. We are a pilgrim people traveling to the land promised by the Father through Christ. This year marks the 60th anniversary in the priesthood of Msgr. Leo G. Schwab. So let us begin our story of the lone and fruitful life he has led by tracing his life back 84 years. It was on June 9, 1894, that a son was born to John and Mary Schwab, after they had suffered the loss of their little son, Marie. Msgr. Schwab's mother was widowed when he was three years old so most of his values and training came from her. The virtues of his mother are surely responsible for the deep and vibrant devotion he has to Mary, the Mother of God.

Early in life, Msgr. Schwab answered the call of Christ to follow Him. When he was 13 years of age he entered St. Andrew's Preparatory Seminary; then, at 18, he entered St. Bernard's Seminary. He was always a bright student with a

special talent for drawing and for humor. The years passed quickly and the long-awaited day of ordination took place on June 8, 1918. His first Mass was celebrated at Blessed Sacrament Church on June 9, 1918. A new covenant was sealed in the Holy Spirit as Bishop John Grimes of Syracuse anointed him and he received Holy Orders.

His vitality, energy, interest and faithfulness in his vocation can be attested to by his fellow priests and the many people entrusted to his care.

Monsignor is well noted for his outspoken remarks that often get him into a little trouble. He spends half of his life apologizing for any hurts this may cause to others. His humility and openness are genuine signs of his growth in prayer. His faithfulness to Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, preparation for sermons and private prayer all bear witness by his life that he is with the Lord. The gifts of generosity to all in need, his understanding and

mellowness increasing with age, shine out from his inner person. He has a keen interest in the sick and makes frequent visits to the hospital, the infirmary and homes for the aged. Monsignor sometimes tells us that the people in these places look so very old and then he finds out they are 10 years younger than he is. He is devoted to his friends, near and far, and never fails to mention in prayer those who have gone to their heavenly reward.

It is always a delight for Monsignor to have the priests visit the rectory for a chat or to play cards. His sense of humor and frankness add sparkle to these evenings. We notice that he is deeply appreciative of any kindness shown to him. Any note of thanks we give him, or a little surprise, is received with heartfelt gratitude. His love for fresh flowers is evident and he admires the ones we put on his table and often takes them back to the rectory. He sees God's beauty in all creation. Another thing that stands out in our minds is that he is so adaptable to changes. Having lived

through many more than most of us, he takes the lead in enthusiasm when carrying out what the Church now proposes for the good of all. He has remarked on several occasions that saying Mass in English has been a rewarding experience for him. He is a source of edification for us in the devout manner in which he carries out the liturgy each day. He has also been gracious in accommodating himself to the feasts we celebrate in order.

It was in the Spring of 1940 that Monsignor was appointed to be the pastor of the newly formed Our Lady of Lourdes Church in West Elmira. He moved to St. Patrick's Rectory from Leicester in June of that year, while the church was being built. The church was finally dedicated by Bishop James E. Kearney on Sunday, Oct. 26, 1941. Msgr. Schwab remained there as pastor until he resigned on May 1, 1969. Eleven years previously he had been elevated to the rank of Domestic Prelate.

In 1972 the Monastery

of Mary the Queen was in need of a priest for the daily celebration of the Eucharist and Monsignor offered to come to us. How well we remember the sense of excitement we felt on that Feb. 2 when the clear sounding bells announced the opening of our first liturgy with Msgr. Schwab. Not many months passed when we were all struck with the flood and Monsignor made great efforts to be with us. His faithful service to us is remarkable. He not only shares his spirituality with us, but makes sure that we hear some of his stories and jokes of which he seems to have volumes. He has new ones all the time and this ability has tempered the trials he has encountered in his 84 years of life.

He is truly a loyal priest of the Church, assiduous in prayer and study, willing and anxious to learn, kindly to the unfortunate, sick and those in any need whatsoever, and he is generous in sharing his time, talents and possessions with everyone. His works of mercy will only be known in eternity.

Two years have passed since Monsignor had serious surgery and he was prepared to face death with a complete confidence in the Father.

In viewing any man's life we must consider his motivation, the end he has in view. Faithfulness has gone before him and truth follows his steps. Monsignor has been a good and wise servant of the Lord, fostering abundantly the talents given him by God. So we, his Dominican nuns of Elmira, join our voices to the many who will praise and honor him on this blessed occasion of his 60th anniversary in the priesthood. We have watched Monsignor grow, we know of his humility, his loveliness, his concern for all mankind, his love of Our Lady, and his contemplation of God's beauty in a flower. What a heaven will be his! His curiosity about the life of Christ, and his many questions about scripture and the lives of various saints will all be known to him. What rejoicing when the Lord will shine on him forever.

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