

On the Right Side

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

'How Did You Like My Ebony Christ?'

To Father Murley, St. Patrick's, Victor:

This letter is to keep accurate an event which is recounted in our diocesan sagas, but rarely recounted accurately. In June 1951, after a year at St. Ann's Church, Rochester, with Father John



Father Cuddy Father John

Merklinger and under the tutelage of Msgr. Naughton, I was appointed by Bishop Kearney to St. Andrew's Seminary to succeed Father Carron. At that time, St. Andrew's had 180 students. Of these, 50 were boarders living at the seminary on Buffalo Road. At Thanksgiving time the seminary was empty, so I went home to join my family in Auburn for dinner. It was cold and just turning dusk when I started back to Rochester and at 7 p.m. On the edge of Auburn a skinny

black youth, about 17, stood hitchhiking. Just coming from a comfortable family and a luscious dinner, and contrasting that with this desolate-appearing lad, I stopped. "Hop in, friend. Where to?" "Buffalo, sir." "Good. I'm going to Rochester and at least you'll be half way."

We chatted. "Where are you coming from?" "Chicago." "Chicago!" I exclaimed. "How did you ever land in Auburn if you are going to Buffalo?" "I started from Chicago, and a big truck going straight to New York picked me up. So I just went along. But I want to go to Buffalo. I hitched a ride back to Utica, but I was so cold I took my last 25 cents and went to a movie theater to get warm and to get some sleep." "Have you had any dinner?" "I stopped at a gas station for the men's room, and the guy there gave me two dollars to get a Thanksgiving dinner. I was hungry. Then you picked me up." I meditated on his insecure life, though he was cheerful enough, and my own life — a family and friends, a vocation I love, and above all, baptism and the Catholic Faith. It was nearly 9 p.m. when we reached the seminary, and it

was pitch dark. Because of the Thanksgiving holiday no one was at the seminary, which was dark.

Now I have long accepted in practice the scriptural injunction about hospitality. So as we neared the seminary on Buffalo Road I said, "Now you have two choices. If you like, I'll let you off on this road. It goes directly to Buffalo. Or if you like, I can put you up for the night and put you on the road in the morning." With no hesitation he said, "I'd like that." So we parked the car, went to the kitchen and had a sandwich with milk. I took him to the guest room, right across from the rector, Msgr. Connell's room, and left him, saying, "I'll call you at 7 a.m. I have Mass at St. Augustine's Church at 8." At 7:30, while he was downing a simple breakfast in the kitchen, he said, "During the night two men came in. They seemed surprised. The older one said, 'How did you get here?' I told him the young one brought me. So they left."

While I am strong for hospitality if I am in charge, I was conscious that it is the rector who must determine the extent and limits of seminary hospitality. So

dropping the lad off on the highway, I celebrated Mass with many distractions, wondering, "How will I approach Dr. Connell? How did he take the unexpected guest? The boy could have been a murderer. Well, I hope he took it in the spirit of the gospels."

Immediately on returning to the seminary I marched myself over to his room, and beaming broadly, said, "Well, how did you like my ebony Christ?" He chuckled quietly. "I certainly was surprised. I almost never go into that room, but I needed

a bar of soap. When I went in, there was this stranger sound asleep. I went and got Father John Cavanaugh, and we woke him up to ask him how he got there. He pointed to Father Cavanaugh and said, 'He brought me here.' Then I guessed it probably was you."

This saga has struck the funny bone of many priests in the diocese, and the story has been narrated with many variations and exaggerations. But this is the true, simple story, epitomized in this writing, but accurate in the facts.

Deaths

Sister Ann Lindner, SSJ

Sister Ann Lindner, who taught at Nazareth Academy for 44 years, died Nov. 20, 1979, in the Sisters of St. Joseph convent infirmary. She was 82 years old, and had been in the congregation for 60 years, originally as Sister Marie Jose.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Nov. 21 in the Motherhouse Chapel by Father Frederick Walz. Fathers Peter Bayer and Joseph Reinhart were present.

Sister Ann entered the convent from St. Felix Parish, Clifton Springs, in 1919. During her postulant year, she taught at Sacred Heart School, Rochester. She then went to the College of St. Elizabeth in Convent Station, N.J., to complete studies begun at William Smith College in Geneva. Her Nazareth Academy assignment lasted from 1922 until her retirement in 1966. In addition to teaching, she lived at St. Agnes Convent on East Main St. from 1924

until 1929, commuting with Academy students who boarded there and helping to supervise their study. She received a master's degree in 1936 at Notre Dame University.

Survivors are nieces and nephews.

Sister Roberta Henry, SSJ

Sister Roberta Henry, SSJ, died Nov. 30, 1979 in the St. Joseph convent infirmary. She was 90 years old and had been ill a long time.

Father Peter Bayer celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial Dec. 1 in the Motherhouse Chapel, with the assistance of Father Joseph Reinhart.

Sister Roberta entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Monica's Parish in 1915. She joined the Nazareth Academy faculty in 1917 and taught freshmen for 10 years. From 1927 until her retirement in 1956, she was the school's librarian.

Survivors include a sister, Mrs. Allen Locke of Wellesley Hills, Mass., and several nieces and nephews.

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