



Getting Shut-ins to Sunday Mass

Soon after our diocesan Campaign for the Handicapped was underway, the following letter appeared in the Syracuse morning paper:

"Stuck in the House, Inc. wishes to thank Bishop Harrison for the improvements he is going to make at the Cathedral for the handicapped. This will be fine for the disabled that are able to transport themselves.

"The handicapped of our Stuck in the House will still have to depend on the Shut-in Mass on TV Sunday mornings because there is no transportation available for them. This is why we keep saying a grant of subsidized money to Wheelchair Cab Co. is the only answer for us.

"Architectural barrier removals is a step in the right direction. Now if we could only get proper transportation we could make good use of these improvements."

Shut-ins of St. Michael's Church at Central Square have that kind of subsidized transportation to Sunday Mass. The financial subsidy, however, comes not from a governmental agency or program, but from an anonymous donor, proceeds of the parish thrift shop and special rates offered by the local ambulance service.

Father John Morse, pastor, whose work with young people and music throughout his priesthood

Fr. Joseph M. Champlin



Our Church Family

has earned frequent widespread recognition, gives as much time and thought to the needs of the elderly and poor in his parish.

Six years ago, the Central Square pastor hired Franciscan Sister Kathleen to work with hurting people in the region.

Her first investigations revealed the need for a doctor to serve the area. That data prompted a broad-based community effort to remedy this situation, a joint venture which resulted in the construction and staffing of a medical center on the village outskirts.

Sister Kathleen then turned her attention to the elderly.

Once again house calls and personal research led to the conclusion that some type of federally subsidized, inexpensive housing for senior citizens was both needed and feasible. The sister's considerable knowledge about government grants and gentle

persistence with reluctant local leaders finally brought her dream to reality.

Now retirees occupy 60 units — houses, not high rise apartments — built with dollars from the government particularly designated for poverty areas like this Oswego County section. Forty more accommodations are in the planning stage.

Finally, the enterprising sister knew that shut-in parishioners could and would come to Sunday Mass if transportation were available.

A local ambulance service agreed to do this on a regular, contractual basis, but for much less than normal fees. Parish leaders then decided to use the proceeds from the Thrift Shop run in the church basement to underwrite costs. However, within a week or two, one parishioner stopped Father Morse and volunteered to pick up the total expense of transporting all the shut-ins who wish to come for Mass.

Today, seven handicapped regularly have the joy of participating in the Eucharist personally at St. Michael's rather than watching each weekend the Mass for shut-ins on television. Another four to eight come on Sundays occasionally, depending on the condition of their health.

There is obviously no "Stuck in the House, Inc." at this Central Square church.

Ye Shall Know Them by Their Children's Ages

The boxes of Band-Aids were on sale and reaching into the display bin, I picked up a couple nearly bumping heads with another woman who had plucked four from the heap.

"I'll have to hide these," I said, recognizing a kindred soul.

She concurred, replied solemnly, "They eat them." We both laughed and walked away, members of the same great sisterhood, Female Parents of Children ages 2 to 15.

It occurred to me afterwards that I could have had the same conversation in any drug store between here and California. We mothers are all very much alike. In fact, by knowing her children's ages, it is possible to tell a woman a great deal about the kind of life she leads.

For example, a mother of children of the aforementioned ages never has a Band-Aid in the house because the slightest scratch calls for four or more, to be replaced within an hour's time.

Sarah Child



All in the Family

More than likely, she also:

—Has a sticky spot on the floor in front of her refrigerator where the little darlings stand and drink their juice, pop, milk, etc.

—Has at least one bedroom in the house that ranges from unsightly to gruesome, six days out of seven.

—Frequently finds that the cold chicken, ham or whatever she planned for the evening meal has been consumed as an after school snack.

—Owns a hamper full of wet towels.

—Would go into a dead faint if at least one young member of the family didn't eye the dinner fare and ask suspiciously, "What is this stuff?"

—Has grown deaf in one or both ears from rock songs whose lyrics if she could decipher them would cause her to throw every radio in the garbage.

—Can't decide whether old reruns of "Gilligan's Island" or "Get Smart" are the more odious.

—Wished she had a long playing tape of certain questions, e.g., "Is your homework done?" "Whose turn is it to do the dishes?" "When was the last time you cleaned your room?" and "Is it necessary to wash your hair EVERY morning?"

—Offers prayers of thanksgiving when it rains and soccer, track, baseball etc practice is cancelled and the whole family can sit down to supper together.

—Feels she has a career, which despite its occupational hazards, she'd trade for no other.

The Harried Month of May

If April comes, can May be far behind? May, with its poetic imagery of newborn animals, flowers, and lovers? No, May with its end-of-the-year merry-go-round of dinners, field days, and school picnics; its graduations, continuations, and evaluations; its band concerts, musicales, and Scout banquets; its CCD potlucks, parish council dinners, and award nights.

Somewhere along the calendar we lost May and it's too nice a month to give up without a fight. Last May I believe we ate together four times as a family — all of them at a potluck or picnic. The rest of the month, Jim and I ate with one child at his picnic, with another at her potluck, or with each other at an end-of-the-year business affair. Meanwhile, back in the kitchen, surviving homesteaders shared good old reliable Kraft Dinner and each other.

Evenings were the same. Because we conveniently managed to have our three in three different schools last year, we often found our presence suggested at two or more programs simultaneously. So we split, amoeba-like, one to the band concert, the other to honor society. Or we dipped into each, leaving early from one, arriving late at another, and doing justice to none.

It was a bad scene in ways other than spending family time together. When each child is tied into a

Dolore Curran



Talks With Parents

school that has a final function, a class that has one, a church class and at least two activities that offer them, that's a minimum of five per child. Multiply by the number of children and parents in the family, add final exams and term papers, and you get an idea of the level of family harmony in May.

It's also unfortunate that children can't witness their siblings' achievements, talents, and awards because they are so taken up with their own calendar. I regretted, for example, that our younger son couldn't attend his brother's band concert last year (especially since they both play trumpet) because he had a Cub Scout picnic. A sense of familiness is helped along by sitting proudly as a family while one member sings, plays, pitches, or accepts a Perfect Attendance Award.

Where is it written that every program, function, affair, club, business, and institution has to schedule

its wrapup in May? Why not spread the pleasure around a bit so it can still be pleasurable?

I know that it makes sense to honor people at the end of the school year, but not if people find it a chore or a bore to attend. I suspect schools use concerts and field days to keep students motivated the last warm days of May when attention and behaviors begin to wane.

Okay. Then let's give May to those whose classes might otherwise degenerate without a performance. For the rest, I suggest we develop a traditional month other than May for honors, wrapups, and awards. Like maybe having a traditional parish council dinner in early November, an honor society recognition in April, a Scouting banquet in dull old January, an employee appreciation kickoff in October rather than a wrapup in May, a family-centered church picnic in August, and a DCCW luncheon in March.

All of life doesn't have to be recognized in May. Let's work with the institutions in our lives to let them know how tough May can be on the family and encourage them to spread the joy throughout the year a bit. Meanwhile, for this year, hope your stamina holds up to the harried month of May in your family.

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