

Fr. Joseph M. Champlin



Our Church Family

Strangers In Our Midst

A six-year-old boy traveling alone to Dallas, a middle-aged man arriving at Detroit and parishioners of St. Walter's Church in Roselle, Illinois, shared common experiences within the past week.

On a flight to Chicago, I had just settled into the aisle when a stewardess led this handsome lad to my row and located him next to the window. The middle seat remained unoccupied.

I helped Jason buckle up, but then returned to my reading under the presumption he was with his family who simply wanted him to have a better view of the outside during this trip.

Soon after takeoff, however, the sound of loud sobs finally broke through my concentration. Looking around, I discovered my aisle mate Jason heaving heavily and, with tears streaming down his cheeks, the epitome of a lonely and frightened child.

That ended my reading.

I moved over next to the boy and discovered he was on his way, alone, to Dallas.

For the next hour, this writer tried to be a surrogate father and caring friend for the youngster, although my 25 years of celibate living made me feel clumsy and inadequate for the task.

I cut his meat (which he never ate), spread the napkin, opened a cup of orange juice, had him wipe his face, read a story about Ranger Rick, heard about his grandparents, learned he was wearing new school clothes and breathed a sigh of relief when Jason dropped off to sleep.

When we touched down at O'Hare, I reassured the boy about the rest of his trip and then said I had to leave the plane.

He looked up with very beautiful but worried eyes and asked, "But who will take care of me?"

Aboard a Greyhound bus from Detroit's Metro Airport to that city's downtown convention center, I watched through the window as a well dressed executive in his 40s or 50s stepped off the vehicle into the warm welcoming embrace of a couple who obviously liked and loved the man.

They may have been his son and daughter-in-law, his daughter and son-in-law, or

some other relatives or just close friends. Whoever, I was impressed not only by the warmth of their hug but by the way they looked into his face with interest and enthusiasm and joy. The visitor had to sense he was deeply loved and an eagerly awaited guest.

Strangers in town who come to our Catholic Churches often must feel much like Jason did on the plane. As I witnessed the Detroit encounter, I thought: "Wouldn't it be marvelous if every person at Sunday Mass felt equally loved and welcomed?"

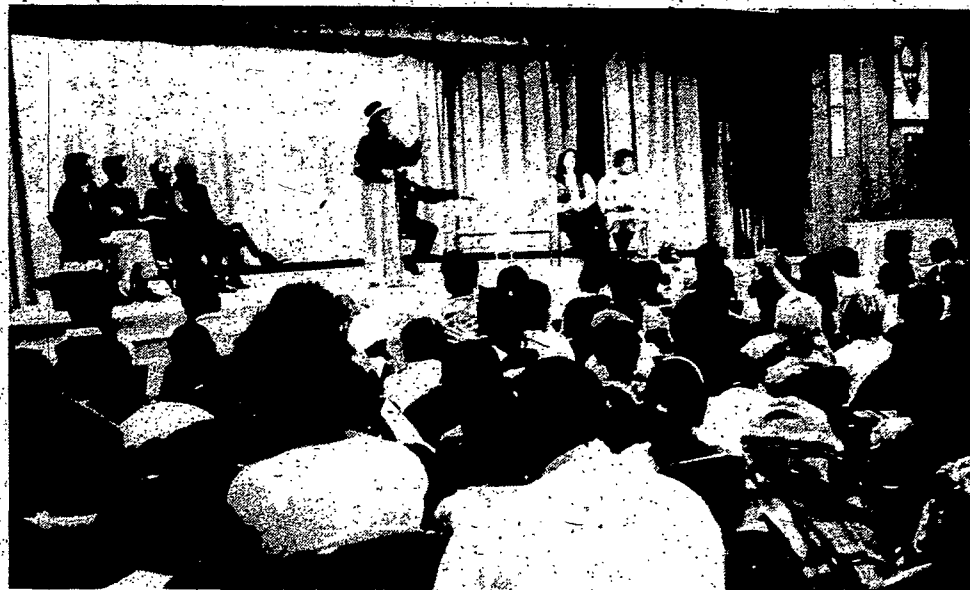
The people of St. Walter's Church at Roselle, Illinois, in the Joliet Diocese are trying to make that dream a reality.

The parish is large, about 4,000 families, with nine eucharistic celebrations each weekend. Before every Mass, nevertheless, some individuals, usually an entire family, stand at the doors, wear welcome buttons and greet persons entering for the liturgy.

These greeters naturally do not know everyone in such a mammoth congregation, but they smile, look happy and wish people greetings of the day.

Volunteers for this ministry sign up on the appropriate book in vestibule and usually fulfill that function about once each month.

The welcome may not be as warm or as strong as that embrace given next to a Greyhound bus in Detroit, but it is a start and could eventually lead to such caring closeness among all parishioners.



Careers Highlighted

Joan M. Smith, RapAround editor, represented the Courier-Journal for a journalism presentation during Career Day, Nov. 21, at Enrico Fermi School (#17). Fourth, fifth and sixth graders gathered in the auditorium to hear people from the Rochester Police Department, The Urban League of Rochester, Eastman Kodak, and Channel 8 discuss their respective careers. The program was coordinated by Mrs. Hela Lipitz, teacher.

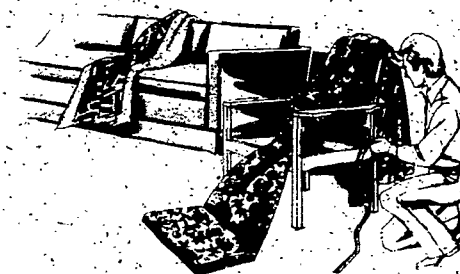
Police Unit Plans Mass

The Monroe County Police Holy Name Society has scheduled its annual Mass and banquet for Saturday, Dec. 6. Mass will be celebrated at Holy Cross Church, 4492 Lake Ave., at 7 p.m., with the banquet following in the school hall.

61st Anniversary

On Thanksgiving Day, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Douglas will celebrate their 61st wedding anniversary with an observance at their home.

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Pope Meets Protestants

Protestant Bishop Eduard Lohse, left, chairman of the West German Protestant Church Council, gestures during a conversation with Pope John Paul II at a meeting in Mainz Cathedral. The pontiff sought to improve relations between the Catholic Church and both Protestants and Jews during his recent journey through Germany.

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