

Fr. John Reedy



Looking for the Lord

A Conversation Remembered

It was probably 20 years ago. At least it was in the days when I, as a priest, thought I was doing something risky and experimental by meeting monthly with a group of Protestant and Jewish clergymen.

For the most part, it was a pleasant luncheon, a social gathering in which we demonstrated that we all were broad-minded enough to break bread with the religious opposition.

In the beginning, it was all caution and excessive politeness, as though we were tip-toeing through a conversational mine field.

Gradually, though, we realized that we could discuss judgments on which we disagreed, and most of those discussions centered on religious attitudes toward law, public policy — Catholic schools, laws on gambling, laws governing distribution of birth control information and devices.

One day we were talking about the Christmas pageants which were part of the public school programs. Quietly, with the awareness that he might offend, one of the rabbis explained why he, and most of his people, regularly repeated their opposition to this observance.

I had come to be very fond of this little man. He was gentle, a very serious scholar, a holy man. When he ended a conversation with a blessing, as he always did, you knew that it was not a mere formula. He was really praying that God would be good to you.

After this particular luncheon, the two of us remained and continued the conversation. I told him that

Babysitting Courses Offered

Registration is open for summer sessions of the Red Cross Parents' Aide course, teaching boys and girls ages 11 through 14 how to babysit.

Participants may complete the course in one Thursday session from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on July 16 or 30, or Aug. 13 or 27. The course will also be offered in two parts on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on July 18 and 25, Aug. 1 and 8, and Aug. 15 and 22.

Instructions will include how to diaper and bathe an infant, nutrition, and emergency first aid. To register, call Red Cross Nursing and Health Services at 275-9800.

BLUE ARMY

The monthly vigil of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima will be held Friday, July 31, at Holy Rosary Church. Father Dennis Bonsignore will celebrate a 9 p.m. Mass. Fathers Robert Schrader and William Leone will conduct devotions.

I could understand the Jewish objection, but considering the prevailing opinion of the community and the small percentage of the Jewish population, I wondered if it might not be wiser to simply keep these children from participating.

Behind his very thick glasses, his eyes were sad. He said, "My friend, I know you probably can't understand this, but everything in our response to a mingling of government and religion is colored by our experience of the Holocaust."

The Jewish community, he told me, was probably never more secure in modern times than it had been in Germany in the early part of the century. Then... how could it happen?

"You will say," he added, "what does that have to do with a Christmas pageant in a public school? What does this have to do with gas chambers and concentration camps?"

"But we can't escape the horror of what happened to relatives and friends who thought it couldn't happen there. How can we be sure it can't happen here? Perhaps we're paranoid, but we dread — with a fear rooted in our experience — any mingling of religious belief with the power of government."

I knew I could not fully appreciate the sensitivity he described, but I had no doubt whatever about the honesty of his description. For him, this fear was very real.

He's dead now, but I often remember him with affection. And our conversation came to mind again this morning as I read a news report which would ordinarily irritate me.

The American Jewish Congress has filed a brief in a case being argued before the Supreme Court. The case involves an effort to have the court strike down a regulation of the University of Missouri which denies the use of campus facilities for any extracurricular religious activities. Predictably, the AJC has argued in favor of preserving the ban.

Personally, I think the prohibition is extreme and unrealistic. When you consider all the nutty groups which do have access to university facilities, it seems ridiculous to decide that religious groups alone should be excluded.

Still, while I disagree with the AJC, I think I have a better understanding of its point of view because of the honesty and sincerity of that conversation of 20 years ago.

This memory would probably surprise my friend. But that, really, is my point. We seldom know how deeply we touch the lives and sensitivities of those with whom we live and associate. At least we should have some awareness of the possibility of such influence — for good or for harm.



Southern Tier Auburn-Geneva

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Sisters of Mercy from throughout the diocese participated in the Mass at the Sisters' plot at St. Mary's Cemetery in Corning on July 14.

Mercy Sisters' 150 Years Celebrated in Corning

By Martin Toombs
Southern Tier Editor

Corning — Its organizer planned a small celebration at the Sisters' plot in St. Mary's Cemetery to mark the 150th anniversary of the Sisters of Mercy. But the service grew so that many persons traveled a distance to attend, and five priests concelebrated the Mass Tuesday, July 14.

The Mass drew 50 persons, more than half of whom were Sisters of Mercy. The event was a celebration of the accomplishments of the Sisters buried in the plot, and of all the Sisters of Mercy during the order's 150 years.

Sister Edria, a teacher at Catholic School South, said that she originally got the idea for a Mass, and the event kept getting bigger. She expressed appreciation for the distance some traveled, and of the lay people who attended.

In his homily, Father Joseph F. Hogan, St. Vincent DePaul pastor, told how the order got its start, and of its beginnings in the United States, which took place in Pittsburgh. He also noted the influence the order has had across the Southern Tier.

He pointed out the difficulties the pioneering Sisters

faced as they struggled against the conditions of the time and anti-Catholic bigotry. He offered that the Sisters had an impact which was not always recognized.

If the faith of the area is strong, and he believes it is, it is a credit to the Sisters of Mercy, Father Hogan said.

Concelebrating were Father Hogan; Father Michael Hogan and Father George Heyman of St. Mary's; Father Francis Davis of St. Patrick's; and Father Stephen Kraus of St. Mary's; Waterloo, a former St. Mary's associate.

St. Mary's, Corning, Renovation Under Way

Corning — Mass at St. Mary's Parish is being offered in the school gym for the summer, while the major reconstruction of the parish's church takes place.

St. Mary's conducted a fund drive last fall to pay for the extensive work being done on the parish's 114-year-old church. Some exterior work was being done even as the drive took place. Workers now are busy with the renovation of the church's interior.

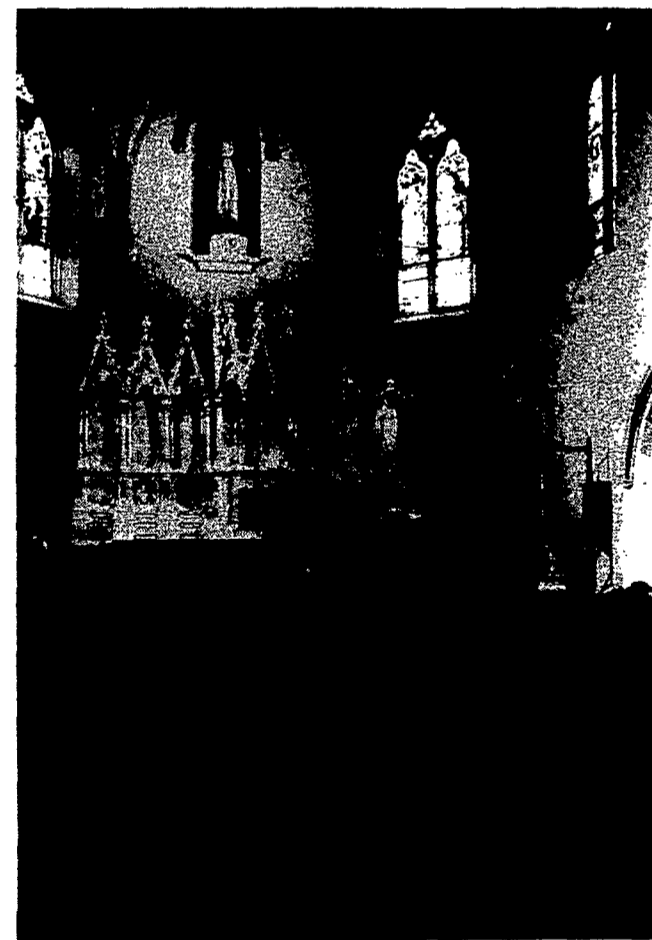
Included in the work is a reshaping of the altar platform, which will move the altar closer to the congregation, and many other improvements including a new

floor, paint, a new heating system, new sound system, and a crying room at the back of church.

Insulation also has been added, and the electrical and plumbing systems updated.

Father Michael Hogan, St. Mary's pastor, said that he hopes to move Masses back into the church by mid-September, although some of the work probably will not be completed at the time, such as the restoration of the stations.

Father Hogan expressed his pleasure with the work so far, and his enthusiasm for the increased brightness the church will have when the work is completed.



With piles of materials around, painters working on St. Mary's, Corning, altar. The church's old altar is being re-painted and included in the new sanctuary design.

St. Patrick's Sets Summer Festival

Mt. Morris — St. Patrick's Church here will hold its fifth annual church festival starting at noon on Saturday, Aug. 15, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in the church parking lot on the corner of Stanley and Chapel streets.

A chicken barbeque will be served from 5 to 7 p.m. and servings will consist of half a chicken, baked beans,

potatoes, coleslaw, beverages and dessert.

Food, craft, plant and children's booths will also be featured throughout the day. Proceeds from the event will help pay the parish debt and the cost of repairing the church. Father John Whalen, pastor, observed. He welcomed persons from throughout the diocese to attend.

Association Plans Cookbook

Hornell — The St. Ann's Alumni Association is preparing a cookbook containing recipes from St. Ann's School graduates. Alumni who wish to participate should send recipes to Peggy Lynch, 24 Erie Ave., Hornell. Contributors are asked to include their name, address and date of graduation from St. Ann's for inclusion in the book.

Anyone desiring to purchase a copy also may write to Miss Lynch.

The Alumni Association also is holding its annual chicken barbecue from 5 to 8 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 15, at the Sons of Italy Hall on Erie Avenue. Tickets are available from William Sirianni of 53 Elm St.

Counselors Needed

Corning — Several junior and senior counselor positions are available for Camp Star, the Southern Tier Rotary Club Camp for Handicapped Children. Persons 18 years of age or older, college students majoring in Special Education or any of the rehabilitation specialities, or have experience in camping and working with handicapped children are encouraged to apply. Interested persons should write Camp Star, in care of Ray Defendorf, camp director, Corning Hospital, Corning, N.Y. Camp Star will be at Watson Homestead from Aug. 16 to 22.

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Deadline

The deadline for submitting news to the Courier-Journal is noon on Thursday preceding the following Wednesday's publication.