

# Ghost Stories

## Who's Haunting Texas Chancery?

By Kerrie Clos

**Corpus Christi, Texas (NC) — All was quiet in the chancery late that night when the two Corpus Christi Cathedral priests were saying their night prayers on the third floor. As far as the priests knew, they were the only ones in the building.**

**So who pushed the button on the elevator and made it rise to the third floor, its doors opening noisily in the dark hall?**

On another occasion, all the priests had retired for the night. One was sitting in bed reading when he saw and heard the doorknob of his door turning back and forth, as if someone were trying to get in.

Halloween night conjures all sorts of spooky things that go bump in the night. But in the chancery office of the Diocese of Corpus Christi, strange, inexplicable things happen all year round. Office workers there, and priests who used to live in the building, still have no explanation for the weird sights and sounds.

"The incidents are nothing malicious," said Father Michael Howell, assistant chancellor of the diocese who used to live in the chancery. "There have just been some strange things that happened that are hard to explain."

The fact that so many "strange things" happened on the same night a few years ago makes diminishing them as coincidence difficult, Father Howell added.

On that night, Father Leonard Pivonka, vice official of the diocese; Father Roger Smith, rector of the Corpus Christi Minor Seminary; and Msgr. Richard Shirley, cathedral pastor and diocesan chancellor, all experienced "something strange," Father Smith said. "Msgr. Shirley and I both heard and saw our doorknobs move, and heard footsteps outside the door on the same night," he said. "I opened the door and no one was there. I was a little spooked."

"Also on that night," Father Howell said, "Father Leonard said he woke up in the middle of the night and couldn't get out of bed. He felt like someone was on his chest."

A seminarian who was sleeping in the dormitory next to the crypt in the

basement of the cathedral also said he experienced the same weight on his chest that night, Father Howell said.

Another strange happening that was hard to explain, he added, occurred when all of the lights -- just in Msgr. Shirley's room -- suddenly went on in the middle of the night.

But perhaps the most amazing incident in the chancery was reported by Father Robert Bradley, pastor of St. Peter's Parish in Laredo, Texas. He stayed in a guest room on the third floor a few years ago.

"I woke up at 3 a.m. and saw two priests and a nun standing beside my bed, all three looking down at me, not talking," he said. "I wasn't dreaming. They weren't hazy, but were as clear as day. I wasn't frightened at all, because I think they were just very friendly spirits who were there to tell us they were OK, or to ask me to pray for them."

The next day, Father Bradley said, he prayed for the three nighttime spirits, whom he said he didn't recognize.

The chancery elevator, which seems to have a will of its own, has baffled several persons in the building.

Around midnight, Father Smith and Msgr. Shirley were praying in the quiet building. Father Howell had gone to bed and the chancery had been deserted by office personnel hours earlier.

The priests were stopped in mid-prayer by the familiar humming sound of the elevator and the clunking of its doors sliding open outside their room.

Dismayed, they waited for someone to step out, Father Howell said. When no one

did, they searched the building. They found no one.

"It was very odd because the elevator has to be activated by someone pushing the button," Father Howell said.

Secretaries working on the third floor after hours also have experienced the "elevator incidents," as they call them. But as baffling as the events may be, no one is worried -- let alone scared -- by them.

The priests and others who have experienced the spooky sights and sounds have, for story-telling purposes, attached names to the spirits.

They named one for Bishop Emmanuel Ledvina, the second bishop of the diocese who served from 1921 to 1949. He was bishop when the chancery was built in 1948.

Another spirit has been assigned the name Sister Mary Xavier Holworthy, a deceased nun who served in the chancery as diocesan archivist for many years. Secretaries working overtime today say they still hear the irascible old nun's familiar door-slamming trademark down the hall when no one else is in the building.

The secretaries say they aren't really serious when they say, "Goodnight Sister. Goodnight Bishop," as they leave the building. But maybe they should.

The idea of spirits is very real, say the priests, who have heard too many things go bump in the night.



### St. Anthony's Marks 75th Anniversary

St. Anthony's Church, Elmira, celebrated its 75th anniversary with a special liturgy celebrated by Bishop Matthew H. Clark, above, Saturday, Oct. 15, in the parish hall. More than 400 attended the Mass. Right, Bishop Clark joins Father James Collins, St. Anthony's pastor, in front of a bell recently mounted in front of the church. The bell, a part of the original church, has an inscription in Latin and a dedication date of Nov. 14, 1915.



### Policemen Get Forensic Training

Elmira -- Area police investigators will be heading back to school this fall when St. Joseph's Hospital and the Chemung County Sheriff's Department present the first in a series of seminars dealing with forensic science and the causes, mechanisms and manners of death at 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 2, in

the hospital's doctors meeting room.

Dr. James Terzian, the hospital's associate pathologist, will present a program dealing with death by asphyxiation.

The series, which began last year, has attracted hundreds of police officers.

Costs are defrayed by a gift from Horseheads Lodge 2297 of the Elks.

#### Macaroni

Holy Apostles Church will serve a macaroni dinner, noon-5 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 6, in the school hall, corner of Lyell Avenue and Austin St.

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