

Turning Homeward With Deacon Joseph Holleran

The stillness has evaporated with this dawn. The quiet has been placed away on the shelf. Now is its turn to wait.

They had ruled out the school halls for the last few months. Halls and classrooms had enjoyed the attention of fresh wax and paint, window washing and dusting. Blackboards are cleaned now and ready for the next year to be written.

A funny time to begin a year — in September — though it is a clock most of us have grown up with and still listen to as parents, students or teachers. The school year has begun.

Homes are resounding to many "thank Gods!" and just as many "Oh Gods!" Sales on school supplies will peak while we may find that the notebook or folder we bought is not exactly what the teacher had in mind. With time, this month will settle, returning to the familiar. Getting back into the routine, though, could be like the playing of a record we've heard just once too often. It can become a routine, just habit. The lunch bags, the faces and assignments, the rooms and walls, the teacher's voice, the bus — all become a blur that uses up the day.

Any job or business, any homemaking or vocation is susceptible to the same malady, where days are lost and become meaningless. Only the weekends and days off are lived for. The day-to-day living is endured, but not embraced. It is a loss. But a loss of much more than time, for we are part of it too.

My first year of teaching is a clear memory. Leaving my car by the school, I would always stop and drink in the day, eager to start, anticipating all the variety and grace it could bring. Each of the simple actions of the day were special because they contained the possibility of touching someone, of making a difference, small but real, in someone else's day.

Years later, I found myself falling into the slide of teaching and living out of habit. The specialness had worn off or perhaps I had stopped thirsting for it. A friend reminded me of the words Jesus once said: "You are the salt of the earth" and "You are the light of the world," Matthew, 5:13-14. That was meant for us too. As creations of God, we have much of His specialness within us. Salt and light — one is a substance, one is an energy. One enhances flavor to reawaken the inside senses. The other changes the way we see outside. In this light, the beauty of each



moment is revealed and with this seasoning, its taste can be appreciated.

There are times though, and jobs, about which I wonder how anyone could live them for long and still find something special. Working on a typewriter assembly line in Elmira was one such. Part of my job was to put the bell on the typewriter that goes "ding." Over 300 machines and "dings" a day. Some workers had been there for more than 25 years. What I see now is that work was not the important thing. It was the people. Their interactions and stories, their individual needs and gifts made it liveable for me. They taught me that living in order to work diminishes, bit by bit, the special grace of each day. There is something more. Later, I learned that it was someone more. He is Jesus, who speaks to us about being salt and light for each other.

Amid the boredom or complexities of some days, the endless tasks and doings for, the next load of laundry or pile of dishes or pile of papers to correct, He becomes the stillpoint. The voice saying "Stop and breathe in the uniqueness of this day, the individual grace of each life in it you may touch. Don't let it slip away. Even the tear that falls, the hurt that endures is a reminder of your humanness, its quality to feel and recognize, its capacity for compassion. Each will have its moment."

There is enough in each day to fill a volume of lives if we would seek it, thirst for its specialness, be light and salt for each other.

That means I can't use the same bulletin board this year, the one that has welcomed the last few classes. This class is unique as they all are. It is composed of young people excited by this beginning, a little frightened by the challenges, yet just wanting to be accepted and loved and allowed to grow into the persons they are becoming. Except for age, then, much like you and me.

We need what we can bring to each other, each moment, each day.

In your life there is that meeting also, that beginning, maybe this month, maybe today as your own light and flavor is realized as special.

September — it's a good time to start the year.

Correction

The Wednesday, July 31 issue incorrectly identified a Sept. 20 Cenacle retreat with Father John Walchans, S.J., as being for men. The retreat is open to both men and women.

On the Right Side

With Father Paul J. Cuddy



About three years ago, I was visiting a fine family in Cayuga County. They had several boys: virile, intelligent, virtuous. All had served as altar boys. I longed that some should become priests, and I mentioned that to the mother. I was bowled over when she said: "I don't think I would want them to be." "You wouldn't! Why not?" "Because the way things are today, I wonder would they stay in the priesthood." It was the first time I ever heard such a doubt expressed, and I suppose it has some validity. However the same applies even more so to marriage.

Recently, I was talking with another mother, and was puzzling aloud why young men of virility and idealism were not drawn to the priesthood. She replied seriously: "Well if you were to begin today, would you choose the priesthood?" "Indeed I would!" "But why would you want to be a priest today?" "For the same reasons I had 50 years ago: to tell the world about our sovereign Lord and His Church; to bring people into the Church and recall the drifters; to offer Mass, the most wonderful privilege in the world; to give the sacraments; to preach God's word; to teach about our Lady and her rosary. I want to share my love for the Church and the pope and the bishop. The priesthood today has more complications than 50 years ago, with interminable meetings and goal-settings; with a terrible increase in bureaucracy within the Church, which I think impedes the care of the people like nurses bogged down by a plethora of reports, obstructing the intimate care of the sick."

The Church suffers from confusion caused by dissident theologians, journalists and fancy-Dan priests. The Church of my youth certainly had its weaknesses and an unreasonable autocracy from some pastors. But we survived because we considered the good of the Church more important than our individual wishes. We had a strong sense of the fraternity of the priesthood, based on an enthusiasm for our Lord and His Church. Consider this beautiful letter.

From a WW II Fighter Pilot:

"Since I never fail to read your column in the Courier, I'm aware that June 15 is the 50th anniversary of your ordination to

the priesthood. I'm happy that God preserved you to reach that milestone because I believe the world needs some of the old-time religion that you constantly preach. Incidentally, your 50th coincides with our 40th wedding anniversary which was June 7.

"I am thinking back to the first time I met you when I was a bright-eyed, gung-ho cadet at Napier Field, Dothan, Alabama. Although I had never been an altar boy, you made me serve benediction at an evening service. Also I still remember the sermon you gave on Christmas Eve, 1943, when you charged us with the obligation to remain pure and loyal to wives and sweethearts who faithfully were awaiting our return. Somehow, Father, you had the ability to make me and hundreds of others feel that the God and Church we knew at home were still close and available even though we were in military service.

"I thank God that my life has been filled with much more happiness than sorrow. I still look back occasionally on my Irish luck. I flew 63 missions over Germany in a P-51 and returned without a scratch. The five buddies who joined the squadrons in England with me in September, 1944, did not share too well. Three were killed; another a POW. One of the six along with me finished out combat tours. I met him and the ex-POW two years ago at our 364th Fighter Group reunion.

"Ten years ago when I lived and worked in Belgium for three years, I looked up and visited the graves of my three roommates — all in military cemeteries in Belgium, Holland and England. But enough, Father. Again, congratulations on your 50th anniversary and may God give you many more."

Fred T. O'C

Class 44 B Napier Field, Alabama
Doesn't this splendid letter combine gratitude for the priesthood, the dreadfulness of war, and the unique comradeship built up among servicemen, which persists even after many decades of separation? To have been a chaplain in the service was a great grace both for priest and for our military men and women.

The Classifieds

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To place a classified ad, call 454-7050 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Classified ads cost 50 cents a word with a \$7.50 minimum. If you mail your ad to us, you may enclose payment or include a billing address.

General

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THANK YOU Sacred Heart, St. Jude, Blessed Mother, St. Anthony for favors received. F.R.

Announcements 7
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