

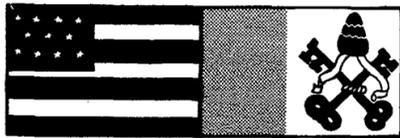
Article on retired priests contained many good points

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

To Father John Hayes in Elmira:
I have just re-read your good article on retired priests in the Oct. 18 issue of the *Catholic Courier*. As you know, I have never believed that an able and willing priest should be dismissed into retirement just because he turns 70.

Pope John XXIII became the head of the whole church when he was 77. With the hue and cry over the shortage of priests, the mandatory retirement of pastors able and willing to continue has always seemed a fraud to me. I am pleased that this has been reformed.

I do appreciate your development under the theme "Great Expectation" about "the freedom from responsibilities about boilers, roofs, finances, cantankerous



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

parishioners. For me one of the greatest freedoms is the liberty from preparing couples for marriage. In addition, I don't miss the paperwork, interviews and especially the wedding rehearsals. Unfortunately, wedding rehearsals often concentrate more on the whims of brides and their mothers than on the holiness of the sacrament.

You stated well the opportunities of priestly service in retirement, and the

Courier appropriately illustrated the concept with the double profile of Father Heisel. His stability, judgment and devotion to the church is typical of most retirees.

However, the section entitled "Harsh Reality" gives me some pause. Your comment, "staying in the rectory where one was once a pastor has its hazards," is well taken. To abruptly go from being a "king-pin" for a long time to a has-been — however more felicitously we might phrase the fact — takes great toll on human nature.

My assignment as pastor in Clyde in 1956 came at the request of Father Curtin, who retired due to failing health. We had been friends for a long time. He wanted to be sure he would have a compatible priest as his successor since he would continue to reside in the rectory. Although I am sure

many things I did were unwise and foolish, he never once criticized anything I did as the new pastor.

It takes heroism and sanctity to cede to someone who rarely is on the same wave length of his predecessor. When he was chancellor, the late Monsignor James McNiff said to me: "I think these chaplains returning from the war should have a year or two as assistants in parishes to get the feel of civilian life." In retrospect — as it applied to me — this idea seemed correct.

Your remark: "The difficulty of a generation gap between older and younger priests in the same rectory" is not new. Pre-Vatican II rectories often had tensions — less about theology, liturgy or clerical dress — but they were more about the authoritarianism of many pastors. We accepted that with docility, if not joy, because obedience was infused partly in our spiritual formation at St. Bernard's Seminary and partly from tradition.

I have often said that if I had not been a parish priest I should like to have been a waiter in a busy restaurant. People seem surprised, but effective serving in a restaurant calls forth so many things required in serving a parish: a study of the customer, cheerful service, sympathy with disheartened people, a challenge with the ornery and unreasonable, special consideration for children, and patience for difficulties.

The priesthood calls for all of these in serving our people, but always with the sublimated intention of serving and praising God through serving his people.

Your article on the retirement of priests has created much interest, since many people are concerned about those of us in the twilight years. We who are retired thank you. With your academic inclination, may you use your pen often to the glory of God and for our diocese.

Serving others should be the goal of all Christians

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 23:1-12; (R1) Malachi 1:4, 2:8-10; (R2) 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9, 13.

Matthew is fond of the number seven. His chapters 21 to 23 form a distinct unit. The unit begins with the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (21:1-11) and ends with his weeping over Jerusalem (23:37-39). In between these chapters are seven conflict stories and seven woes.

Sunday's reading is the central passage of the unit. Jesus' words are harsh and are aimed at hypocritical religious leaders.

Jesus starts with the principle that religious leaders have authority, the power to teach. But teaching is a matter of example as well as of word. Only those who practice what they preach deserve to be followed.

Jesus lashes out at two attitudes found in some religious leaders of his day. The first is their lack of love for their neighbor. They lay heavy burdens on them and do nothing to help them bear their burdens. They criticize without caring, they point fingers but never lift a finger to help.

The second attitude concerns one's love for God. True love doesn't worry about externals, but about what goes on inside the heart.



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

Therefore Jesus tells his disciples not to be fond of "titles" of respect. Respect and honor should be given to God above all else. The greatest are those who serve, not those who are served.

Once there was a man, Horville Sash, who had a very humble job in a certain company, the lowest job in the basement of the building. He was a mail room clerk.

One day he saw a bug scurrying across the floor. Horville may have had the lowliest job in the whole company, but he was bigger than the bug. So he raised his foot to flatten the hapless bug. This story is a fable, thus the bug spoke: "Spare me and I will grant whatever you wish." Horville spared the bug and wished to be promoted to the second floor. His wish was granted. Zap! He found himself working on the second floor.

But Horville heard footsteps on the ceiling above. A higher floor meant higher wages. The next day Horville rose to the third-floor job of sales coordinator. But his

ambition did not stop there. He wished for more promotions. He went to the 10th floor, then the 20th and the 50th. Still he was not satisfied. Sitting by the indoor pool on the top floor, he found a stairway leading up to another floor. He scrambled up the stairs and found himself on the roof. He was content because at last he was the highest and the greatest.

Coming down the stairway, he found a boy with his eyes closed.

"What are you doing?" Horville asked.

"Praying," the boy replied.

"To whom," Horville asked again.

"To God," the boy said as he pointed skyward.

Panic gripped Horville. Was there a floor above him? He couldn't see it; just clouds. "Do you mean there is somebody above me? Someone greater than I?"

"Yes," the boy replied.

Horville summoned the bug. "Make me God. Make me the greatest," Horville said. "Put me in the position that only God would hold if he were on earth."

That very day, Horville began working in the mail room again.

Yes, the Pharisees were proud, hypocrites and hard of heart. But how do we rate when compared not with them but with Jesus? He was in our midst as one who serves. Do we have the heart of a servant?

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