

# All are responsible for 'marginal Catholics'

By Father Paul Cuddy  
Courier columnist

Father Paul J. Ryan's mother, Lillian Morrissey Ryan, has been a friend of mine for many years. A native of Auburn, she has spent much of her life in that city as well as in West Webster.

Father Ryan was recently planning a trip to Tabasco, Mexico, to find out how our sister diocese was faring since his departure a year ago. Since his mother was living at St. Patrick's rectory in Aurora, Father Ryan asked me to serve at the parishes the weekends of May 18 and 25.

"You and mother will be good company for one another," he said. Unfortunately, Lillian Ryan suffered a stroke and had to be taken to Auburn Memorial Hospital, leaving me domestically on my own.

Four parishes make up the cluster: St. Patrick's in Aurora, St. Joseph's in Cayuga, St. Michael's in Union Springs, and Our Lady of the Lake in King Ferry. Each church is about seven miles apart.

The Mass schedule may sound a bit onerous, but really it's not. Two Masses are celebrated on Saturday evening — one at 5 p.m. in Aurora and the other at 6:30 p.m. in Cayuga. The schedule on Sunday calls for a 9 a.m. Mass in Union Springs

and an 11 a.m. Mass at King Ferry.

In addition to separate parish councils, the Cayuga Team Ministry Council — which is headed by a president and representatives from each parish — meets to protect the rights and traditions of each church. Councils are consultative and advisory as required by canon law. The pastor makes the final decisions, which can cause tension unless clearly understood.

Attendance at each Mass was fairly comparable — around 120 souls turned out at each church. With the summer vacation season fast approaching, people who stay in cottages on Cayuga Lake swell both St. Joseph's and St. Michael's churches to the point where people overflow onto the street.

If statistics are accurate, the four churches probably have about 500 regular parishioners and another 500 marginal Catholics. These are the parishioners we must kindly but zealously seek out and convince to return to the church. This can't be done by just the pastor or even by a dedicated small staff. Getting them back to the church can only be accomplished by the many people who live and work with these people. Father Joseph Champlin calls these people "marginal Catholics."

In addition to Father Ryan, the parish staff includes Religious Education Director Sister Patricia Flass, SSJ, who lives in the rectory at Our Lady of the Lake; Deacon John Prave, who lives in Union Springs; and an efficient core of concerned parishioners.

After confession, I asked a high school lad in Aurora: "Do you know why priests just give Our Fathers and Hail Marys for penance?"

"No, I never thought about it," he said. "Well, if I asked you to say the Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity, what would you do?" I asked.

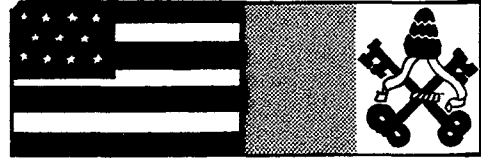
"Why, I'd say them. I know them well," he replied.

As a reward, I gave him a superb little prayer book entitled *Treasury of Prayers*.

In Cayuga, I addressed two nice high school boys: "A dollar if you can say the Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity."

They did not win the dollar. For their goodness, however, I gave each a copy of *Treasury of Prayers*, and I suggested they think about studying for the priesthood. They were vacationers from Oswego.

What about the clustering of parishes? Archbishop John Carroll was the first American bishop. A giant of a prelate, he



## ON THE RIGHT SIDE

established what later became Georgetown University. He also founded the Catholic school system in the states through Mother Seton and her Daughters of Charity.

His diocese embraced the 13 states after the revolutionary war. He had only 17 priests to serve such a scattered flock. From these beginnings eventually came our many dioceses and individual parishes. They were shepherded by their own pastors with their own spirit and traditions.

Ideally, everybody would like a priest for every parish. But that means we need men who will answer the call, "Come, follow me," in this especial vocation. In the meantime, the priest shortage means that the Catholic community must assume more responsibility for each parish — especially returning "marginal Catholics" to the church.

# Caiaphas becomes angry after Paul joins the church

By Cindy Bassett  
Courier columnist

Nearly three weeks had passed by the time the two temple guards, who had accompanied Saul to Damascus, had returned to Jerusalem. Neither of them were surprised when they were summoned to the private chambers of Caiaphas, the high priest.

Crafty Caiaphas was careful not to reveal his true motives for the meeting. "I trust you had a good journey," he asked.

They both nodded in agreement and he continued. "Where is Saul and all of the prisoners you were supposed to bring back from Damascus?" Caiaphas asked.

It was the first time that either of them related the strange occurrence on the road leading into Damascus. Caiaphas looked from one man to the other as each one struggled to put into words what had happened.

"We were on the outskirts of the city when the light came and nearly swallowed us in its wake," one of them said.

"I thought certain that I heard someone speak," the other guard added.



"It may have been Saul talking just after he was blinded by the brilliance of the illumination," his companion continued.

"I heard him saying over and over: 'I have persecuted him.' I wonder who Saul was talking about?"

The chief priest's face twisted with annoyance. "What happened after that?"

"We took Saul to a house in the city," one of them replied.

"Before we left Damascus, we went to see Judas, the man who owned the house. He told us that Saul hadn't eaten anything for nearly three days. We saw him, sightless, lying on a bed in a state of confusion. We can only assume Saul is dead now."

A moment of silence occurred before the chief priest's angry words burst forth like an explosion. "A dead man does not go through the city preaching!" Caiaphas

shouted as he picked up a letter from the table and quoted: "To the chief priest of the temple in Jerusalem from the leader of the synagogue in Damascus: We understood from you that Saul had come to our city to arrest the followers of Jesus Christ. Since his arrival here, he has gone round the city preaching about this Jesus. Because of Saul, there are even more followers of Jesus than before he came. We have placed him under arrest, but have reason to believe that Saul has already left Damascus. His new friends have helped him escape."

Meanwhile, the followers of the way in Jerusalem had also heard the news about Saul. Barnabas, one of the church members, told the same story. He received a skeptical reaction.

"We know that God can work miracles, but this seems too good to be true about Saul," Peter said.

"He is called Paul now," Barnabas continued. "The name is symbolic of his change in heart."

"I am not convinced that this is not just a trick of whomever he calls himself now,"

James added. "He will pretend to be one of us so that he can round us up as his prisoners. It would be a brilliant move on his part."

"It is Paul who is going to suffer much because of his faith in the name of Jesus," Barnabas replied. "I am here today in support of him. And I sponsor him as a new member of our church."

**Scripture Reference:** Acts, Chapter 9:20-31.

**Meditation:** How can your own experience of Jesus serve as a witness for others?

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