

Hospital work brings moments of edification

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

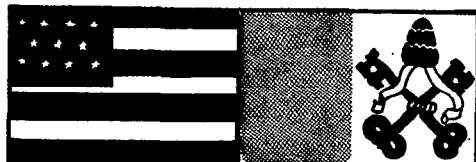
Hospital chaplaincy has loomed large in my priesthood. In 1966, Bishop Dennis W. Hickey assigned me to St. James Mercy Hospital in Hornell from Clyde for five happy years. I succeeded Father John Coonan.

At the end of five years I felt inadequate to teach the student nurses at St. James Nursing School so I requested a transfer. Bishop Hickey — our director of personnel at the time — transferred me to Holy Trinity Church in Webster, where I served under Father William Hart.

Within a month of my coming to Webster, Bishop Hickey, who realized that I was not pressingly needed at the parish and that I had gained experience in hospital, called me to say: "Father James Schwartz, chaplain of Rochester General Hospital, is on sabbatical. Father Paul Freemesser has been supplying for him, but he has an Army commitment for two weeks, and we need someone to supply as chaplain of RGH for the two weeks of his absence."

So I became the chaplain at Rochester General, substituting for Father Freemesser who was substituting for Father Schwartz.

Over the ensuing years I have had the privilege to serve many times at Rochester General and The Genesee Hospital for Father Lawrence Murphy, and at St. Ann's Home/The Heritage for Father John Glo-



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

gowski. In addition, I have served at Strong Memorial Hospital for Father Dan Torrey and at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester for Father Fred Helfrick.

I have also enjoyed visiting with patients and staff at St. Joseph's Hospital, Elmira, for the Carmelites. Since moving to Auburn, I have also celebrated occasional Masses at Mercy Health and Rehabilitation Center for Franciscan Father Regis Rodda and the Franciscan Sisters of Syracuse. The sisters run a superb nursing-home facility in Auburn.

This past June, Father John Roach retired for health reasons from the pastorate of St. Felix Church in Clifton Springs. Father Roach had also served at Clifton Springs Hospital.

In the spirit of clustering brought on by the shortage of priests, St. Felix Church and St. Francis Church in Phelps have combined into a beginning cluster. Father Anthony Calimeri currently serves as pastor of St. Francis and administrator of St. Felix.

Now the Clifton Springs Hospital is under the care of Father William Cosgrove, pastor of St. Dominic Church in Shortsville — which is located only about five miles away.

For many years I have substituted in Shortsville for the vacationing pastors. This began two years ago under the late Father John Woloch, and has continued for several years under Father Cosgrove. (His brother is Father James Cosgrove in Waterloo.)

On July 15 I began my annual stay at St. Dominic's. My three weeks there included daily Mass; Saturday-Sunday Masses and instruction; Monday Miraculous Medal novena; one Mass each at two nursing homes; Communion calls to the sick under the guidance of Neil Harkenrider, a native of Rexville, and a 39-year veteran in the Shortsville-Manchester School District. (He began as a teacher, then became principal and finally superintendent of schools. Harkenrider is now retired and a dedicated worker for both the church and the communities of Shortsville and Manchester).

The care of Clifton Springs Hospital is less onerous for me because Father Cosgrove arranged with Father Calimeri to take night calls, giving him the hospital beeper for emergencies. On my visitations during the week, I anoint people who are critical so the need of night emergencies is minimized. In 10 days I had occasion to anoint four people.

Hospital work and visiting the sick

brings edification, humor, sadness and friendships. In a recent visitation an elderly lady welcomed me enthusiastically: "You are the priest who writes for the Courier. Those articles give us great encouragement. They don't make priests like they used to."

I'm not sure what she meant, but I smiled at her affirmation of those of us put out to pasture.

I also met a wonderful woman who was sitting in the Intensive Care Unit. She was there with her elderly mother, who wore an oxygen mask so I thought she was unconscious. I asked the daughter: "Are you Catholics?"

"Oh, yes, very much so," she replied. "Has your mother been anointed?" I asked.

"No, but we want everything we can get," she replied. The mother, who had awakened somewhat, was able to receive Viaticum. After the anointing and prayers, she revived enough to carry on a cheerful conversation. To my surprise and their pleasure, I discovered that the mother is the godmother of Father Foster Rogers, pastor of Auburn's St. Alphonsus Church, where we are eight priests in residence.

I was saddened after visiting a man who was sick for years and often in pain. Yet there was an edification from the care and tenderness he receives from his wife, family and friends.

It is a great privilege to practice the work of mercy. We should all visit the sick.

Perform preparations prior to receiving Communion

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 6:41-51; (R1) 1 Kings 19:4-8; (R2) Ephesians 4:30-5:2.

Sunday's readings are great, for they are so relevant. Would you ever have thought that so great a prophet as Elijah would have pleaded to God to die? He had had it. On Mt. Carmel God had sent down fire from heaven to vindicate Elijah, and he slew the 400 false prophets of Baal. You would have thought their deaths would have ended his troubles. Instead, Jezebel, who was furious at his massacre, sought Elijah's life.

So Elijah ran away. He was so tired of fighting and of being persecuted, that he prayed for death: "This is enough, O Lord! Take my life ..."

Have you ever felt like that after you've tried to do what was right? You've tried to live your faith. You even tried to defend your faith against the false prophets of our times. All you got for your efforts was the muddy end of the stick. Maybe you were laughed at. You've had it! You're tempted

to say, "Oh, what's the use, Lord? I give up."

Elijah felt like that when he was ready to give in and give up. We all know how exhausting worry, care and fear can be. These caused the apostles to fall asleep in Gethsemane; similar worries and cares caused Elijah to fall asleep under a broom tree.

Then an angel touched him and ordered him to get up and eat. And behold, he found a cake and a jug of water. He ate, not once, but twice. Then in the strength of that food, he walked 40 days and 40 nights to the mountain of God, Horeb. There, on Mt. Sinai, the roots of God's people, Elijah recovered his fiery ardor. Soon afterward he was swept up to heaven in a flaming chariot.

Now, Jesus promised a bread that can lift us up out of the depths. "I am the bread of life" — He who will give life. "I am the living bread" — He who makes life worth living.

That bread is Holy Communion. Food can hurt us if we wolf it down because it can cause indigestion. Perhaps, we profit so little from our holy Communion,

because we receive the bread of life too hastily, making no preparation, no thanksgiving.

The Our Father and the Sign of Peace are good preparations, if they are an expression of our inner forgiveness of others who may have hurt us.

Our reception of the sacrament should be a fervent act of faith, an "I believe" — expressed by an ardent "Amen" to the words "The Body of Christ."

And our thanksgiving ought to be a TWA: "T" stands for thanks — thank God the Father for giving His Son; "W" stands for welcome — welcome God the Son for coming to us; and "A" means to ask — ask God the Holy Spirit for all the graces we need and we should ask for others.

The second obstacle to receiving power and strength from our holy Communion is mortal sin. Our Lady has wept over the many sacrilegious Communion in the church today. At every Mass, just before receiving holy Communion, the priest prays: "Lord Jesus Christ, ... As I eat this bread and drink this cup, let it not bring me condemnation, but health in mind and body."



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

"Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily ... eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Cor. 11:27, 29).

Sacrilegious Communion is so unnecessary, because confession of sins is so easy. "Don't be afraid, little Johnny my boy. Just open the door and walk in. The longer you wait before confessing your sins, the harder it is to begin."

Monthly confession, at least, is a must!

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