

# More sisters should make a habit of habits

By Father Paul Cuddy  
Courier columnist

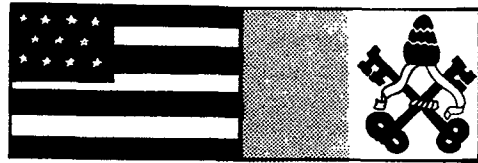
Father James Cosgrove, pastor of St. Mary's in Waterloo, phoned me.

"Could you take care of the parish Aug. 19, Monday, through Sept. 1, Sunday. That would include two weekends" — Aug. 24-25 and Aug. 31-Sept. 1.

"I am committed to Father Richard Orlando in Lyons. I should be glad to come for the rest," I replied. So it was settled. He and his beloved Airedale, Derry, left Sunday for vacation.

The week began with 7:30 a.m. Mass on Monday for a congregation of more than 50 people — a constant daily group. Then came two funerals, three anointings and an elaborate wedding on Saturday. These were in addition to the usual responsibilities: phone calls, queries, hospital visitations and the like.

On Thursday two Sisters of Mercy came to help me package some Sheen tapes among other things. Since they are sisters who wear the habit, I decided they should give visible witness in this area to Our



## ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Lord, the church and religious life.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen, Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II think the holy habit is a precious sign of witness. Although most sisters have ditched the holy habit, I think Archbishop Sheen, Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II are correct.

I have often thought what a happy shock it would be to our people if all of our more than a thousand sisters suddenly came out in religious habit on the same day. The vocation crisis would be lessened, because many young women still have a desire both of serving and of belonging. Our people would regain that confidence they once had

when a phalanx of sisters sat together with us in the pews.

If this is a case of "old men dreaming dreams," it is a dream shared by thousands of Catholics and non-Catholics.

Since I had two sisters, visibly so in the habit of the sisters of Mercy, I decided to utilize them for Our Lord and His people. We began after lunch at the home of Ursula Zeck, whose brother was buried that morning. The relatives and friends converged at the home for post-funeral gathering.

Then we went on to the local Taylor-Brown Hospital to visit the sick. Then on toward Geneva General Hospital, but first a stop at St. Mary's beautiful cemetery to see the Rosary Shrine with its 50 huge golden beads cast at Goulds Pumps, Inc. in Seneca Falls. It is dedicated in memory of Father Albert Shamon, who will be buried there.

Do I dismiss the sisters who don't wear habits? Of course not! Many are good friends who consider me a well-meaning, slow-witted oddity. They are dedicated to Our Lord, the church and society. My gratitude to them, however, does not change

my conviction that if all sisters were visible witnesses of their religious life, their communities would be stronger and our people happier — a concept shared by Archbishop Sheen, Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II.

St. Mary's Church in Waterloo has a long tradition of devotion and parish loyalty. Many parishioners are involved in special devotions. People who went to Medjugorje have brought back special spirit. The Monday bingo is an amiable kind of fellowship. The recent summer festival netted \$29,000. The parish school, which houses pre-school through the eighth-grade, is full.

The weekend Mass attendance is around 1,000 souls with lots of beautiful babies, young children and devoted parents. On the weekend I had the four Masses, I gave an instruction on prayer. I recommended the little prayer book *Treasury of Prayers* and we sold 575.

Consider the spiritual zip given to so many souls as these prayer books float about, not just through the area but to many other places.

## Paul starts a new church for the believers of Malta

By Cindy Bassett  
Courier columnist

"Do you know this place?" I said to Commander Julius as soon as our feet touched shore. The Northeaster had blown us so far from our intended course that I had no sense of where we had landed.

Julius looked disoriented. Fourteen days of being thrashed about on the high seas had affected him. "I'm not certain. It doesn't look as though it is even inhabited."

The island where we had taken refuge did have the look of some remote, deserted land. It was chilly and raining this morning and we were enveloped in a foggy shroud.

"Everyone is safe," Paul said coming up to us both. "God will take care of all of our needs."

I merely nodded to him as we walked farther up the beach, where our circumstances changed drastically. A huge crowd of people had come from seemingly nowhere and greeted us warmly. These locals told us that we had washed ashore on Malta, southwest of Italy. When the weather finally broke, we would be able to sail to Rome in three days time.

For the first time my mind went back to the fate of the Alexandria. There was nothing left of her except the broken wooden pieces that people had used for makeshift lifeboats. And even these remnants would be gone soon. As I stood watching, people were pitching them into the huge bonfire that was blazing for us on the beach. The atmosphere had become quite jovial. I didn't blame these people for wanting to be

rid of anything that might remind them of their ordeal at sea.

I looked around for Paul. He had blended with the locals immediately. I marveled at his resilience. There he was gathering wood and throwing it wholeheartedly into the bonfire.

But, suddenly, a woman's high-pitched scream shattered the moment. "Murderer!" she cried, pointing at Paul. "This man was not killed by the sea. But the goddess of justice will see to his evilness!"

"What's going on?" I asked Commander Julius.

"Apparently Paul disturbed a snake that was under the woodpile. He was bitten on the wrist before he shook it off. This woman sees the whole thing as an act of the goddess of justice for some crime Paul has committed."

"Is Paul going to die?" I asked.

"If the goddess of justice has her way," Julius said wryly. "Malta might be governed by Rome, but these Greeks are ruled by a whole array of gods and superstitions."

For his part, Paul seemed unmoved by the whole incident. He merely went on with his work even though this woman continued to taunt him. A small crowd of people also gathered to watch what they thought would be Paul's inevitable demise.

Nothing happened to Paul. And at mid-morning, this same woman screeched a different thing to the crowd: "This man must be a god sent to us from the sea!"

Paul smiled at the locals and shook his head saying, "I am an ordinary man. It is faith in my God that saved me."



## THE BIBLE CORNER

And he spent the rest of the day preaching to them about Jesus Christ.

That night, we were invited to dine with Governor Publius who treated us to a banquet. When Paul learned that the governor's father was ill, he went to see the sick man and healed him.

After that, for our entire three-month stay on Malta, Paul was besieged by the locals who brought all of their sick to him. It was an amazing thing to see. Paul healed everyone of their diseases.

Before we left the island, Paul started a church because so many of the people came to believe in Jesus Christ. And when we finally sailed for Rome, the people loaded us with everything we needed for our journey.

Paul stood with Commander Julius and me on deck, watching Malta slowly disappear from sight. "As I told you, captain, God did provide for us," Paul remarked.

Scripture Reference: Acts, Chapter 28:1-11.

Meditation: "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him." (Matthew 6:8)

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