

Be wary of scams when assisting missions

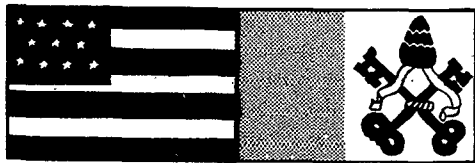
By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Recently, the "retired" Father Bart O'Brien of Horseheads sent me an envelope containing three letters.

One letter was from a young man in Nigeria, asking for \$1,200 so he could study for the priesthood. He wrote that he had no money to pay the costs. Another was from the man's bishop, highly recommending the candidate. And the third was from Father O'Brien, asking if I knew anything about the seminary or the bishop. The seminary candidate had found Father O'Brien's address in a booklet circulating around Africa.

Father Jerry Aman, SJ, a graduate from McQuaid Jesuit High School, is a friend of mine. The former Webster man is serving in Nigeria as spiritual director and guide to a group of young Nigerians training for the Jesuits under his aegis. They all live at the Jesuit Community House in Ibadan, Nigeria.

I wrote to him and asked him to make inquiries about the seminary and the bishop. He promptly replied:



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

"I read the letter from the rector of St. Michael's Seminary to Father O'Brien, and took it over to the rector of our major seminary here in Ibadan. Both of us are suspicious. 1. We cannot find St. Michael's Seminary listed for Etit, Nigeria. 2. The letter is not on official letter head which is rare. 3. The amount requested seems exceedingly high.

He continued, "But I have written to the Vocational director of the concerned diocese, and await his reply. I just finished a letter to Father O'Brien that he hold off until I get some response. There are needy young men here who would make fine priests. But there are also a lot of shysters.

I'll keep you informed."

Two weeks later came this reply: "I received a reply from the rector of the Minor Seminary in Okigeve. He assures me there is no such seminary as St. Michael's, and no such priest as 'Rev. Michael Nwosu,' so the whole issue is a fraud.

"I am disappointed that Fr. O'Brien would be subjected to such a crass attempt to get money. I hope he will not let it color his view of the Nigerians. There are plenty of bad apples, here, but God also has a wonderful and abundant harvest. There are many needy and deserving people, but whoever wrote Father O'Brien is not one of them. Thanks for having the foresight to check into the whole matter."

Many of our people are anxious about helping spread the faith. The Society for the Propagation of the Faith and Catholic Relief Services are outstanding. They do an efficient job with a minimum of overhead. Several missionary orders are recommended. Some Catholics have relatives and friends who are missionaries — priests, brothers and sisters, who deserve some personal assistance and encourage-

ment.

I am privileged to help several people, even in a limited way. My special friend is Bishop Raphael Ndigni of Nukuru, Kenya. A highly efficient man, he uses money and resources wisely. The bishop has established a native community of Franciscan sisters who — among their expanding responsibilities — serve as teachers, social workers and nurses.

The bishop is developing an exceptionally well-educated and zealous group of clergy and religious around him. The former head of the Kenyan Bishops Conference, he is always involved with evangelization and civic affairs. But there are so many who need help.

I have written to Father O'Brien: "Well, we caught the crook. Perhaps you will give the cash you might have given to the shyster to Father Aman who has many needs, and is developing a strong native priesthood in Nigeria."

Any readers are invited to share in the development of priests, brothers and sisters in the Third World. Can you think of a better investment?

Joseph's brothers fear his wrath, but he forgives them

By Cindy Bassett
Courier columnist

"Father is dying," Judah said to his eldest brother, Reuben.

Judah's statement was perplexing. Reuben studied his face for a long time before answering. "We've all know that, even father. He's made his peace with his family. What are you so worried about?" Reuben asked.

"Because when father dies, Joseph will finally seek his revenge on us after all of these years," Judah replied.

"Why now, after so much time?" Reuben asked not expecting an answer. It had been long ago, but even so, he had never been able to wipe the shameful incident from his mind...

Everyone had been out tending father's sheep, except for the youngest brother, Joseph.

"I tell you, it's not fair, Reuben," Dan remarked. "You are the eldest and by your position, you deserve certain rights as the first of the 11 brothers."

"And father does give me certain rights," Reuben protested. "You don't see him entrusting the herds to Joseph."

"Of course not? Father has made all of us his slaves. Everyone, but his precious Joseph. And why should that brat not do any work?" Simeon mocked.

"You don't even see it, Reuben," Dan added. "All of us, especially you, are be-

ing made the fool. You might as well face it. Joseph is father's favorite. When father dies, he'll probably leave everything he owns to him!"

Reuben shook his head. "I still think you are mistaken."

"No, brother, it is you who are wrong. And that coat father gave to Joseph proves it!" Judah said.

It was true. The gift of the coat to Joseph had been a shock. It was the most wonderfully made garment that Reuben had ever seen. It had been woven with all of the colors of a rainbow.

When Reuben had first seen the coat, he had been certain that father had meant it for him. He had even pretended not to see it so that he wouldn't spoil father's surprise. But the next day, he had seen Joseph prancing-around in that coat like a peacock. Reuben's anger at father's slight against him still welled up inside after all of this time.

But father's gift to Joseph did not justify what they had done. The force of their resentment had stunned even Reuben. Why had Joseph worn that silly coat when he'd come looking for them?



As soon as his brothers had seen him with it, they circled him like wild animals ready to pounce on their prey. If Reuben hadn't stopped them, they would have killed Joseph. Instead they threw their youngest brother down into an old well where Joseph wailed like an injured ram. And before Reuben could save him, they had sold him to some traders headed for Egypt.

"Where is the boy? What have you all done?" Reuben had cried when he learned that Joseph was gone. "This will kill father. What are we going to tell him?"

"You are the eldest, Reuben," Simeon mocked. "Tell him that Joseph is dead." Father had mourned for years over his

loss of Joseph. But he didn't die. And many years later, it was Joseph, the governor of Egypt, who had saved them all from starvation because of the famine that had come over the land.

"Joseph will not seek his revenge on us," Reuben said as he turned back to Judah. "It's not his way. It's never been Joseph's way."

But, in the end, after their father had died and the period of mourning had passed, Reuben went with his brothers and bowed low before Joseph.

"Now we will be your slaves," Judah said, speaking for them all. "It is only right after what we did to you."

Reuben was right. Joseph would not hear of it. It was not his way.

"Get up, all of you," Joseph said. "Don't be afraid. Am I your God and judge? For what you meant for harm, God used for good. Because of my position, I have been able to help save many people. And I will continue to provide for all of you for the rest of your lives."

Scripture Reference: Genesis, Chapters 37 and 50.

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