



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Charles E. Clark, a parishioner at Fairport's Church of the Assumption, volunteers his services as an acolyte, eucharistic minister and lector at the 11:15 a.m. Mass each day and as an usher at the 9:15 a.m. Mass on Sundays.

Yankee Doodle Dandy still an altar 'boy' at 90

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

FAIRPORT — On almost any day at the Church of the Assumption, 20 East Ave., Catholics can witness a veritable wonder of human longevity serving at the 11:15 a.m. Mass.

"I've been an altar boy since I was seven," explained Charles E. Clark, an Oswego native whose family moved to Rochester three years after he was born on July 4, 1903. "I guess my mother pushed me into it."

To realize just how long Clark has lived, note that when he came into this world, Theodore Roosevelt was president of the United States and Bernard J. McQuaid was still the only bishop the Rochester diocese had ever had.

And that when Clark began selling automobiles in 1925, the first car he sold was a Ford Model T.

Clark claims that no secret fountain of youth sustains him. He certainly looks at least 10 to 20 years younger than his age, and moves with a grace that belies his nine decades of life.

"No smoking," he replied after pondering questions about how he lived so long. "I take a drink every now and

then, socially."

His mother, Suzie, and his father, Albert, may simply have passed on the right genes to Clark, who pointed out that his mother lived to 92 and his father to 93.

Although he retired from selling cars in 1965, Clark apparently has no plans to stop serving the church. In addition to his duties as an altar boy, he has served as a parish trustee. Clark also currently serves as lector and eucharistic minister both weekdays and weekends, and he regularly ushers at the 9:15 a.m. Mass on Sundays.

"To watch him get up and down so agilely from the kneeling position or to see him reading from the Scriptures without the benefit of glasses would lead us to believe that he is much younger than he actually is," wrote Father Edward Golden, pastor, in the Fairport parish's July 4 bulletin.

Father Golden also noted that Bishop Matthew H. Clark had written the faithful layman on his 90th birthday.

"Your daily example enriches many lives, assists others and encourages all of us to share our gifts with the community," Bishop Clark wrote.

Charles Clark also seems to have found the secret to a long and happy spiritual life through his steady devo-

tion to the church. He noted that serving at weekday Mass focuses his life.

"I just always look forward to Mass," he said. "Just being in the presence of the Lord."

He also enjoys his lecturing duties.

"It gives me a feeling of satisfaction that the people are getting the word of the Lord," he commented.

His stepdaughter, Barbara Murphy of Canandaigua, enjoys watching her father serving at the altar.

"It's beautiful," she said with a smile.

Murphy is the daughter of his second wife, Marguerite, who currently resides at Thompson Nursing Home in Canandaigua. Clark sees Marguerite at least twice a week, he said. The couple toured the world together following his retirement in 1965 from Fairport's Hupp Motors, which he had bought into in the 1930s.

Despite having spent most of his life hearing the Tridentine Mass in the years before Vatican II, Clark prefers the new style of liturgical worship. In particular, he noted that having the celebrant face the congregation makes it more interesting for parishioners than when the priest celebrated Mass with his back to worshippers.

"I think the parish gets more out of it," he asserted.

Nun, 97, enjoys active lifestyle

By Kate Pipkin
Catholic News Service

BALTIMORE — She may not walk as fast as she used to, but 97-year-old Sister Francesca Lindner still walks 1.6 miles a day.

"I guess the only disadvantage to being 97 is that I can't quite walk like I used to," said the Mission Helper of the Sacred Heart.

Sister Lindner, who turned 97 on May 22 and lives at The Villa, a retirement community for members of several religious orders in Baltimore, has practically defied the forces of nature, remaining as active and healthy as any young career woman of the 1990s.

Daily walks are just one of her many activities. She also tutors a 12-year-old boy in religious education, visits nursing homes, sews, crochets, goes to the symphony and, of course, prays and attends daily Mass.

Standing only about 5 feet tall, Sister Lindner carries her rosary with her everywhere, usually in the pocket of the habit she made herself. She fondly refers to her rosary as her "partner."

Staying active is what keeps her feeling so young, Sister Lindner says. Inclement weather doesn't stop her from getting daily exercise. If it's raining, she simply pops the Richard Simmons tape into the VCR and starts exercising.

Energy and activity have always been traits of Sister Lindner, who grew up as an only child on the family farm in Portland, Ore.

At the age of 29 she traveled on a train across the country by herself to train to become a Mission Helper of the Sacred Heart.

"A vocation is a calling from God," she said. "My faith has always played a big part in my life. Without it, I never would have been able to cross the country."

She has lived in Baltimore for about 15 years. Before that she worked in various states, including New York, Virginia, Texas and even in a mining town in Arizona.

Sister Lindner said she never attended Catholic school and wanted to dedicate her life to teaching the faith to other children who didn't go to Catholic school.

She continues that work today with a 12-year-old boy who has not yet been baptized. She met the boy's mother on one of her many walks through the neighborhood.

And she continues to educate herself as well by taking classes in canon law at the convent.

Sister Lindner makes sure to read the newspaper every day and watch the news. She says she is frustrated sometimes by the lack of moral standards in the world today, saying "there's so much of that sex business now."



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